

Youth, Global Citizenship and Help: A Critical Rhetorical Analysis of
Free The Children

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DEDICATION

To my son Wes, who over the years has inspired me with his curiosity, passion and conversation. One day soon the kitchen table will be covered with your textbooks and projects.

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ABSTRACT

Since 1995 Free The Children (FTC) has grown to be one of the largest and most recognized youth-focused and youth-led non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Canada. FTC has distinguished itself by developing slick marketing campaigns, promising youth that they will become agents of change who can make a significant contribution towards eradicating poverty and promoting global social justice. The organization has utilized the Internet, creating an engaging and dynamic web page used to promote its development initiatives and celebrate the altruistic actions of its young participants. FTC uses a variety of strategies including text, video and images to persuade the viewer to engage with and elicit support for the organization. FTC attracts viewers by highlighting the successes of its overseas initiatives and the contributions made by young Northern volunteers in the global South. The organization also uses celebrity ambassadors, and cultural events such as We Day to raise its profile. Using a critical rhetorical analysis, this thesis interrogates FTC's online promotional materials, exploring how the organization uses rhetorical strategies to persuade young people to take an interest in social justice activities. More specifically, an examination of FTC web-based promotional materials identifies and problematizes the organization's rhetorical emphasis on youth empowerment, global citizenship and direct forms of helping the global South. This thesis argues that FTC does not direct adequate attention to fostering critical awareness among its participants. Further, the organization fails to provide its online participants with the appropriate tools or opportunities to critically engage with the structural issues related to global inequities. This thesis also examines how the organization uses rhetoric that promotes simplistic, feel-good projects that avoid exposing young people to an analysis of global social injustices.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

On the Free the Children website there is a link to a video that highlights the annual Canada-wide We Day event hosted by the organization. The three minute and forty-five second video begins with a crew setting up a stage in an empty Air Canada Center. The camera pans over banners of past hockey heroes. Craig and Mark Kielburger, co-founders of Free The Children, prepare like hockey players ready to take to the ice. A strong steady drumbeat begins to play, much like a heart beat. The voices of a teenage girl and boy take turns narrating the video, the inflection of their voices matching the steady beat. The venue begins to fill with eager looking young people holding handmade posters and wearing hand crafted t-shirts with phrases like “We 2 can make a change” and “We LOVE Peace” scrawled across them. The beat of the music quickens. The camera shifts back and forth between celebrities and well-know public speakers preparing to take the stage and an exuberant, cheering crowd. As the intensity of the music increases, so does the cheering of thousands of young people. It is reminiscent of a rock concert. As the beat reaches a crescendo, the music explodes into the song “Firework” by Katie Perry and images of well-known celebrities and public figures flash across the screen. Appearing larger than life are pop stars Justin Beiber, The Jonas Brothers, Nellie Furtado, athletes Magic Johnson and Shaquille O’Neil, activists Jane Goodall, The Dali Lama, Martin Sheen and Mia Farrow, billionaire business man Richard Bronson and former political leaders Mikail Gorbachev and Al

Gore. Suddenly the singing ends and the background music becomes soft, quiet and slow as Craig Kielburger addresses the attentive, silent crowd.

A parade of speakers then go on to deliver heartfelt messages to the crowd, with audience members hanging on their every word, some becoming emotional and crying. The pace of the music then increases as young people share how We Day has inspired them to take action. At the same time, the speakers begin to deliver their messages in frenetic sequence, finishing each other's sentences, as text appears on the screen highlighting the ways in which young people have participated in and supported the We Day 'movement'. The text reads "Over 2200 Coin Drives", "1820 Bake Sales", "Over 1800 Dances", "The Largest Facebook Cause in the World", "3,400,000 Volunteer Hours" and "\$20,000,000 for 500 Causes". At the pinnacle of the excitement, Craig and Mark Kielburger shout to the crowd "Who is ready to make a difference?" and "Who is ready to make a change?" The crowd responds in unison "WE ARE!"

We Day - The Movement of Our Time, YouTube, 2013

Some international non-governmental organizations use such spectacles to attract awareness to global causes. Free The Children (FTC) designs its We Day events to appeal specifically to young people. Such rallies that engage a large audience on an emotional level draw attention to issues that are of major concern to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) but that seldom make headlines (Kirk, 2012).

Over the last several decades, the number of international NGOs¹ has grown considerably (Mutua, 2006; van Tuijl, 1999; Wallace, 2003). They have been active in promoting globally sustainable development, education, gender equality, peace, environmental sustainability, and human rights, as well as access to clean water and health care. Youth-focused and youth-led NGOs are an emerging segment within the NGO sector, and FTC is prominent among them.

FTC's emphasis on recruitment of youth in the field of global development is significant from the perspective of critical public pedagogy. Public pedagogy can be understood as "a concept focusing on various forms, processes, and sites of education and learning occurring beyond formal schooling and is distinct from hidden and explicit curriculum operating within and through school sites" (Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdic, 2011, p. 338). Many cultural institutions such as museums, zoos, and libraries, as well as "informal sites such as popular culture, media, commercial spaces, and the Internet" (Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdic, 2011, p. 339) practice public pedagogy. Further, public pedagogy can occur "through figures and sites of activism, including public intellectuals and grass roots, social movements" (Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdic, 2011, p. 339). Therefore, learners are not strictly students enrolled in a course or program, but a wider public.

FTC is an example of a site of public pedagogy. Its website recruits members, fundraises and informs people about its programs, and in doing so, it also provides

¹ The term NGO refers to organizations that are private, not for profit, members of civil society (Quist-Adade & van Wyk, 2007) and are "geared toward improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people" (Vakil, 1997, p. 2060). NGOs operate at the international, national and local level. However, for the purposes of this research, NGO will refer to organizations that are based in the global North and provide aid to countries in the global South.

public education. This thesis analyses the kind of public pedagogy that FTC's website performs with respect to young people's participation in international development. A critical public pedagogy, according to Giroux "should be used to expand the public good, create a culture of questioning and promote democratic social change (2004, p. 76). However, as will be demonstrated, FTC's website falls short of a critical pedagogical role.

Using a critical rhetorical analysis, this research examines the ways in which FTC promotes its message of social justice and development to young people, especially online. I will consider the extent to which FTC presents opportunities for developing a critical understanding of global inequities by examining its rhetoric of working to realize substantive social change. More specifically, through an examination of the organization's website, I will identify and problematize FTC's emphasis on (1) youth empowerment, (2) global citizenship and (3) direct forms of helping the poor. My research into these particular emphases has implications for how young people understand and participate in development. While my thesis does not examine how young people actually respond to FTC's rhetoric, I demonstrate that FTC aims to guide participation in some ways and not others.

An organization such as FTC has a variety of choices in how it presents opportunities for young people to participate in global change. Although we cannot know the effects of its publicity on young people or on international development efforts generally, we can interpret its publicity messages for what they say and do not say about empowerment, global citizenship and helping. For example, FTC frequently touts its mission as 'empowering' youth; however, my analysis questions

the extent to which participants are exposed to the kinds of skills and knowledge that would enable them to develop a critical analysis of global injustice and thereby empower themselves to be effective change agents. I also explore the organization's rhetoric about creating global citizens, a complex concept that is often linked to a sense of cultural superiority of privileged Northerners. Finally, I investigate FTC's rhetoric surrounding small, feel-good consumerist helping activities and the extent to which they contribute to educating youth about the root causes of global social injustice. I argue that FTC fails to provide its online participants with the appropriate tools or opportunities to work to change the structural issues at the root of global inequities.

FTC is the focus of my research due to its widespread popularity and recognition throughout Canada. The organization has its head office located in Toronto and is gaining visibility in the United States and the United Kingdom where it has branch offices. The organization is an international charity and educational partner to schools in the global North involving over 500,000 children and youth through awareness groups and activities and over 1.5 million children and youth globally spanning over 45 countries of the global South (Free The Children/Annual Report/2011).² Due to the growth in active participants, FTC considers itself to be one of the world's largest networks of 'children helping children' (Free The Children, 2013). FTC views its primary goal as:

² FTC is considered a youth organization because of the ages of both its Northern members and Southern beneficiaries. FTC attracts members that range in age between approximately 10 years to early twenties. The organization places an emphasis on empowering children and youth in the global South through a variety of initiatives and campaigns. The range of ages within FTC is itself worthy of discussion and presents a number of conceptual challenges; however, this topic will not be covered in-depth in this thesis.

...to free children from poverty and exploitation and free young people from the notion that they are powerless to affect positive change in the world. Through domestic empowerment programs and leadership training, Free The Children inspires young people to develop as socially conscious global citizens and become agents of change.

Free The Children/Our Goals

According to FTC's 2011 annual report, youth made up 37 percent of the overall involvement in funding, contributing \$10.5 million in cash and in-kind contributions.³ Free The Children also enjoys a partnership with Me to We Social Enterprises.

Since 2009, Me to We has provided Free The Children with over \$4 million dollars in cash and in-kind donations. Both Free The Children and Me to We were founded by Marc and Craig Kielburger but they are independently managed, overseen and financially audited.

Free The Children/About Us/Financials

Me to We is run independently of Free The Children and considers itself "an innovative social enterprise providing people with daily choices that advance positive social change" (Me To We, 2013).

As media reports frequently note, the organization has grown considerably since 1995 surpassing its humble beginnings in Kielburger's family home. Craig Kielburger founded the organization at the age of twelve after reading about the murder of twelve-year old Iqbal Masih, a former child slave in the Pakistan carpet industry who spoke out about the horrors of child labour and slavery. After hearing about the young activist's murder, Craig was moved to action and enlisted eleven school friends to begin campaigning for children's rights. Determined to

³ According to Free The Children, approximately one third of its budget was raised through donations of in-kind goods and supplies that are used to support domestic We Day activities as well as health and school supplies used for its International Adopt a Village development model.

demonstrate their ability to make a difference, the group engaged in advocacy activities such as writing letters to then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, along with other heads of state, giving speeches, circulating petitions, travelling abroad and holding press conferences (Kielburger & Kielburger, 2006). Their goal was to draw the world's attention to the abuses of human rights faced by many children of the global South.⁴

At thirteen years old and in the early stages of FTC's advocacy work, Craig travelled to Asia on a seven-week fact finding mission. Throughout his travels he witnessed first hand the devastating prevalence of poverty, lack of health care and education, and child labour. Upon asking a human rights worker what he could do to help, Craig was told to "continue your journey. Learn as much as you can. And then go back home and tell others what you have seen and ask them if they think it is fair that places like this exist in the world" (Kielburger & Kielburger, 2006, p. 7). While still in Asia and with the help of a former child labourer, Craig held a press conference. He drew Prime Minister Chretien's and Canada's business leaders' attention to the impact that international trade regimes were having on the world's children. He realized that the fate of the children he had met in Asia was shaped by the action taken by people in wealthy countries, "especially people's tendency to consume inexpensive products without wondering how they had ended up on the shelf" (Kielburger & Kielburger, 2006, p. 7). This quote reveals that early on in the

⁴ The terms global North and global South as well as North and South refer to the socio-economic divide between wealthy developed countries and poorer non-developed countries. While the majority of wealthy countries are geographically located in the northern hemisphere there are exceptions such as Australia and New Zealand. The term global North and South focuses on ex-colonies that have been subjected to colonial and imperial rule.

work of FTC, patterns of Northern consumption were acknowledged as significant to global social inequities. Today the message of consumption is still important; however, the role consumption plays in the organization has changed.

Initially, FTC's focus was on drawing international political attention to children's rights abuses through advocacy. Over time, the organization has adopted a more apolitical approach, as I will document in this thesis. Instead of engaging in letter writing campaigns, circulating petitions and advocating for policy change, the organization now focuses on fundraising campaigns designed to foster consciousness among youth in the global North regarding global inequities. An approach to development that focuses on economic, social and cultural rights is now central to the organization's mission. For example FTC states that:

Everyone is entitled to basic human rights, but not everyone is in a position to assert them. Free The Children takes a "rights-based approach" to its work. We focus on battling exploitation and poverty so that those who traditionally lack social and economic power, such as children and women, can make decisions about their lives. Out of respect, not pity, we work hard to give back the dignity and freedom to those who have been denied it.

Free The Children/How We Work

This approach is exemplified in the Adopt-a-Village program, which supports community development in areas that have high incidences of child labour and exploitation, providing support to women and girls that lack economic and educational opportunities. The Adopt-a-Village program includes five pillars deemed necessary to lift communities and individuals out of poverty; education, alternative income, health care, clean water and sanitation and agriculture and food security. Program sustainability is an important focus of the Adopt-a-Village program and FTC works to ensure that "communities are empowered and take

ownership over introduced changes” (Free The Children/International-Programming/Our Model). While this work is integral to FTC’s development initiatives, it demonstrates a shift from the organization’s initial political activist stance to a more apolitical approach. Rather than advocating for political change the focus appears to primarily be on ameliorating the symptoms of global inequalities. This depolitization is accomplished through encouraging young people to engage in fundraising efforts to support development programs such as Adopt-A-Village.

FTC has gained widespread attention through its use of popular media. The organization uses televised events, social media and print media, as well as partnerships with television networks to promote its initiatives and fundraising efforts to its members. Both Craig and Marc Kielburger have attained celebrity status, especially Craig. Craig and Marc both contribute columns and articles to the Toronto Star, Globe and Mail and Huffington Post, while Craig can be followed on Twitter and Facebook. Craig has also shared the stage with past world leaders and celebrities such as former U.S. President Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela, the Dali Lama and Oprah Winfrey. In addition to gaining prominence within popular media, the organization has successfully marketed to youth by using corporate sponsorship and celebrity endorsements. It is also actively involved with elementary and secondary school boards, colleges and universities across Canada. Publicity strategies and partnerships such as these give FTC exposure and access to young Canadians, its large target population.

Literature Review

In this section I will review key scholarly works in the field of childhood and youth, development and global citizenship studies to explore various themes relevant to FTC including young people, global citizenship and helping. To date, the work of FTC as a unique organization has received little scholarly attention. I will draw on literature related to the aforementioned themes to establish the foundation for my analysis of the organization's rhetoric in subsequent chapters.

Free The Children

Although FTC has not been the focus of much scholarly attention, at least three scholars have written significant analyses of the organization. Stasiulis (2002) outlines the difficulties associated with reconciling children's active citizenry with dominant Northern notions of childhood. Contrasting FTC's emphasis on children's participation, agency and empowerment with Canada's state policy, justice system and children's politics, Stasiulis highlights the tensions between legislation and implementation of children's participation. Ultimately, she contends that FTC's focus on child participation is an important alternative to adult authored laws and policies that claim to provide young people with a voice but continue to exclude them from political participation. Stasiulis' optimistic position regarding FTC dates back to a time when the organization was first gaining widespread attention in national and international media and appeared to be more like a grassroots social movement of young people than the large NGO it has come to be.

In contrast, Kennelly (2011) provides a brief critique of FTC while exploring the forces that shape young people's place in the political processes. Kennelly

identifies FTC's depiction of activism as built on consumer choice and self-development, a style of community voluntarism that allows young people to feel better about themselves.

While Jefferess' (2012) article focuses primarily on FTC's sister corporation Me to We, his analysis is relevant to my thesis, as FTC's website promotes Me to We initiatives that include volunteer travelling and purchasing of ethically produced clothing and accessories. In fact, the distinction between the two organizations on the FTC website is often difficult to identify. Similar to Kennelly (2011), Jefferess analyzes how a focus on consumption-based activism produces individual consumers who understand their relationship with the world as a moral obligation solely in terms of their purchasing power. Although this is certainly significant, a sole focus on consumerism obscures other forms of accountability. Further, Jefferess critiques the Me to We enterprise arguing that consumption-based activism and consumer fulfillment obscure participants' recognition and understanding of how they themselves may be implicated in global structures of inequality.

Kennelly and Jefferess take a more critical position towards FTC than Stasilius (200). As I have noted their research was written after FTC had established itself as an NGO with mass appeal to young people. The contrast between the early and more recent analyses supports the argument that the organization has become depoliticized.

Childhood and Youth: Blurred Lines

Many scholars acknowledge that definitions of childhood, children, young people and youth are contested. Skelton (2007) argues that “definitions of who is a child and who might be called a young person often vary over time, space and also within a particular context whether the focus is social, economic, political, legal or cultural” (p. 166). For example, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) protects children and young people under the age of 18 (Mayo, 2001; Skelton, 2007). However, definitions of age in national legislation vary, and a country can change the definition of child by adjusting the age of majority (Skelton, 2007). Even within a single country, there can be a range of definitions of child. For example, in Canada the Ontario Child and Family Services Act specifies that a person under the age of 18 years is considered a child whereas British Columbia’s Child, Family and Community Services defines a child as a person under the age of 19 (White et al., 2011). Many scholars see childhood ending at the age of 14, due to the fact that many children in the global South begin taking on adult responsibility such as work and marriage by 14 years of age (Hart, 2008; Mayo, 2001). Definitions of childhood can be problematic as young people in the upper age range are often excluded from the categories of child and adult both, creating situations where young people are in limbo (Skelton, 2007).

Introducing the concept of ‘youth’ does not resolve the difficulty of defining age categories. Commonly, youth refers to teens and young adults. However, Chana (2007) notes varying definitions of youth among institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank, including varying age ranges. Further, Mayo (2001)

argues that the North uses tools such as the CRC to impose definitions of youth and childhood as universal, without taking into consideration cultural differences.

It must be acknowledged that young people have unique and divergent identities shaped by ethnicity, gender, class, race, religion, ability and sexuality (Banaji, 2008). Not all youth who join organizations such as FTC are motivated by the same reasons or share the same positive and affirming experiences.

Furthermore, not all young people are inclined to join social justice organizations, for reasons noted by Kennelly (2011):

... activist cultures within Canada, which come from a specific history of white middle-classness (see Levitt 1984; Plamer 2009), unintentionally reproduce subcultural practices that serve to exclude people who have not been exposed to the 'common sense' values of that of white, middle-class structure of feeling about activism. (p. 82)

Young people who do not identify with the white middle class, may not feel an immediate sense of familiarity or comfort in activist culture grounded in white, middle-class norms and therefore may be less likely to participate in social justice activities. Many are dissuaded from becoming active at all, or channel their activism into forms that dominant discourses construct as negative. These forms of activism may include initiatives taking place outside of adult sanctioned activities, actions that challenge the status quo, or state policy and/or authority. Hence, not all actions undertaken by youth are equally sanctioned or even recognized as being rooted in social justice efforts. Further, social barriers to participation in culturally acceptable activism increase the likelihood that certain youth will be either labeled as 'apathetic' or characterized as 'bad activists'.

A substantial body of literature has developed around the issue of the apathetic young person and what measures can be taken to encourage political and community engagement (Banaji, 2008). Media and other adult representations of youth often conjure up images of self-absorbed, indifferent young people who are disinterested in political participation and community involvement (Gordon & Taft, 2011; Kim & Sherman, 2006). However, such a negative view of youth is not shared by all, especially not by FTC, which applauds young people's involvement in its programs. It appears that FTC positions itself as a solution to youth apathy highlighting the importance of providing young people with opportunities to be active in social justice activities.

Many scholars also challenge the perceived crisis of youth apathy, acknowledging the various ways in which youth are choosing to engage with social issues and with charitable organizations. For example, scholars have written about youth activism and have explored the strategies and methods being employed by policy makers, researchers and educators to encourage young people to become involved with government and community, although mostly in normative ways that are thought to promote societal cohesion and good citizenship (Chana, 2007; Gordon and Taft, 2011; Kim & Sherman, 2006; and Yeung, 2007).

What constitutes 'good citizenship', however, is debatable. Kennelly (2011) analyzes discourses of citizenship that posit 'good citizenship' as actions undertaken by young people that are beneficial to the community and to the nation-state and that can resemble activism. Young people involved in adult and state sanctioned organizations such as FTC are likely to be constructed as 'good citizens'. For

Kennelly (2011) however, the actions of the 'good citizens' do not challenge the inequitable structures, practices and policies of the state. Their efforts, therefore, are limited in terms of broad based change. In contrast, the 'bad activist' is someone who challenges the state, who adopts non-standard approaches to participation, who is perceived as requiring surveillance, and whose work is seen as undesirable and undeserving of recognition (Gordon & Taft, 2010; Kennelly, 2011). 'Bad activists' are often involved with organizations critical of state policies, such as Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (Kennelly, 2011) and less structured social movement organizations, such as those engaged in protests against global trade and financial arrangements (Flanagan et al., 2007). As I will argue in this thesis, FTC's encouragement of young people to become active participants in an apolitical approach to global social injustice works to affirm members of the organization as 'good citizens'.

Since the introduction of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989, there has been an increase in the number of NGOs campaigning with and for young people to ensure that children's right to political participation is protected (Mayo, 2001). Despite the increased interest in, and awareness of, children's right to participation, there continues to be a gap between what has been enshrined in the CRC and what has been put into practice. Hart (cited in Mayo, 2001), has found that many young voices are still not being heard because their inclusion in organizations is merely decorative or seen as tokenistic. Hence, although young people appear to be quite active in volunteer organizations, their ability to meaningfully contribute to social justice efforts may vary.

When young people do have opportunities for meaningful participation, how they direct their volunteer efforts is important given the value of their contributions. Youth raise large sums of money and donate a considerable number of volunteer hours, which have significant impact on the ability of charitable organizations to carry out their missions.⁵ Evidently, a certain proportion of young people are prepared to take action, to heed the distress calls from a world beyond their own, and to respond to social injustice and environmental emergencies with confidence, compassion, emotion and thought-provoking solutions (DeCaro, 2011). Many young people are not afraid to engage with issues that many adults shy away from (Chana, 2007). However, as Charania (2011) explains, charitable organizations provide too few analytical skills to assist youth with the exploration of the causes of oppression and poverty. This criticism is consistent with Kennelly's (2011) analysis that many youth-focused organizations tend to promote non-critical approaches to youth activism, which do not challenge the state and are, therefore, more likely to be broadly supported through institutions such as schools. In other words, many youth-focused organizations adopt an apolitical position as a means of gaining acceptance among, and entry into, mainstream institutions, thereby enabling them to capitalize on participants' enthusiasm, commitment to social justice issues and consumer lifestyles.

As the literature suggests, young people's participation in an organization such as FTC is complex. On the one hand, FTC provides an outlet for engagement

⁵ For example, the average donation to Free The Children is \$8.00 raised by holding bake sales, walk-a-thons, garage sales and coin drives. Free The Children has provided the opportunity for youth to deliver over one million hours of volunteer service each year (<http://www.freethechildren.com/> retrieved 2012).

with international development that is consistent with the principles of the CRC, and counteracts the notion that youth are apathetic, while keeping youth activities within socially respectable limits. On the other hand, although young people's participation is encouraged as a means of furthering global social justice, the activities they undertake are often confined to charitable giving and apolitical forms of 'helping'. This research will interrogate inconsistencies between FTC's rhetoric of achieving substantial social change and its lack of attention to fostering critical awareness among its participants.

Global Citizenship

My thesis examines the way FTC uses rhetoric about global citizenship throughout its online promotional material. Even beyond FTC, many note that the discourse surrounding global citizenship is complex and fraught with contradictions. Roddick (2008) calls for a much needed examination of the concept based on the widespread presence of the term within development discourses and the NGO field. Of particular interest for me is the link that arises in FTC between youth volunteering and global citizenship.

O'Byrne (2003) notes that being a global citizen is more than just recognizing or identifying with the world and its people; it is about understanding the dynamic and direct relationship one has with the globe. Dower (2002) and Noddings (2005) argue that a global citizen takes responsibility for all citizens in the world and accepts a moral obligation to address issues of social inequalities and injustices. Further, Dower (2002) notes that when someone claims they are global citizens

they are making “some kind of moral claim about the nature and scope of our moral obligations” (p. 146). Further, they accept that they have:

obligations in principle towards people in any part of the world; for instance, help[ing] alleviate poverty, work[ing] for international peace, support[ing] organizations trying to stop human rights violations, or play[ing] one’s part in reducing global warming. (p. 146)

The moral rhetoric of global citizenship is prevalent in youth focused organizations and is used as a way of entreating youth to act on global issues.

In contrast to the morally obligated global citizen is the idea that the global citizen is motivated by economic gain. Byers (2005) notes that some advocates of global citizenship associate that concept with a “capitalist economic system that now dominates the planet”(¶ 25). A free market approach to global citizenship decreases the opportunity for individuals to examine, as Byers (2005) puts it, their “own country’s complicity in the global power game, and ... the hypocrisies and hollowness of less rigorous or more benevolent conceptions of global citizenship”(¶ 30). Further, Shultz (2007) highlights the fact that a neoliberal approach to global citizenship embraces a single global market that encourages people to help those in need through charitable donations, while avoiding an analysis of the power structures that maintain global inequities. Urry (2000) identifies how the media play a key role in developing and maintaining an economically driven global citizen. Appealing to the emotions and consumer tendencies of its members, organizations often encourage what Urry calls ‘shallow global citizenship’. He notes that:

the most people want is to be a part of a small community concerned about the plight of the Amazonian rainforest, the war in Bosnia, the famine in Ethiopia, but not cognitively to understand the nature of such events or what might be seriously done to eliminate them. (pp. 181-182)

Bowden (2003) also problematizes the construct of the global citizen in both its moral and economic dimensions, as the concept has historical linkages to colonizing missions in the global South. Global citizenship draws on the imperialist mind frame of the global North where perceived outsiders are welcome so long as they measure up to Northern values and norms (Bowden, 2003). Imperialism is advanced through a concept of global citizenship in which Northerners impose their own values, and political and economic systems on the South. The global citizen becomes representative of the North through embracing a neoliberal approach to economic globalization.

Global citizenship remains a contested concept and various tensions are evident in the way in which it is understood. The notion of global citizenship is complex and cannot be conveyed in a paragraph, an experience or a sound bite. Nonetheless, it is an appealing construct and one that is liberally espoused by FTC. This research will interrogate the disconnect between the shallow moralistic and economic rhetoric of global citizenship on the one hand, which is prominent in FTC's promotional material, and the more critical understandings of the concept in international development scholarship.

Helping

Couched in the Christian parable of the good Samaritan and the idea that offering assistance is a way to secure the salvation of one's soul, helping has long been associated with the benefits that helping provides, especially to the giver

(Gronemeyer, 1992). The action of helping espoused by the Church underpinned proselytizing missions to territories conquered by a number of European countries. As Gronemeyer states, the effects of extolling help through the Christian message, as well as duty to the Church, created a set of meanings that would later influence the way that help is delivered. Gronemyer (1992) notes three elements connected to the notion of the good Samaritan that have added to our current day understanding of help:

1)The global dimension of the right to receive, and duty to provide help.... 2)The utopian content – hopes of ultimate redemption attached to the notion of help. And 3) the idea of improvement – only through help is the recipient raised to the level of true humanity. This implies a view of the cultural and spiritual superiority of the giver. (p.57)

These elements have impacted the way in which modern day help is enacted in the forms of charitable international development assistance by NGOs.

Petrie (2008) highlights the concept of the 'gift' in the context of helping and charity. Building on the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Jacques Derrida, and Pierre Bourdieu, among others, Petrie demonstrates the imbalance of power that is created when one group can give a gift but the likelihood of the other group reciprocating is small. Because of this power imbalance, helping, whether through the gift of money, time or skills, has the potential of creating unforeseen and possibly negative consequences for the recipient. For example, the recipient of aid is often tied into repayment plans that include high levels of interest on debts. This situation is often compounded by unbalanced terms of trade whereby more prosperous nations are able to take advantage of the indebted nations' cheap labour as well as the ability of

transnational corporation to benefit from favourable tax status. These realities establish conditions of inequality and domination, which become historically entrenched.

Since the end of the WWII era, improvement of social conditions in the global South has been measured against the benchmarks for development set by the North. According to Escobar (1995), the delivery of aid underscores that the North is developed, while the South remains undeveloped. Of concern to Escobar are the relations of power and forms of domination that have occurred since the introduction of Northern development aid as a way to address issues of poverty, disease and social injustice. Tucker (1999) further develops Escobar's economic analysis, explaining how domination may include the political and cultural realms:

Development is the process whereby other peoples are dominated and their destinies are shaped according to an essentially [Northern] way of conceiving and perceiving the world...It is an essential part of the process whereby the 'developed' countries manage and control and even create the Third World economically, politically, sociologically and culturally. It is a process whereby the lives of some peoples, their plans, their hopes, their imaginations, are shaped by others who frequently share neither their lifestyles, nor their hopes, nor their values. The real nature of this process is disguised by a discourse that portrays development as a necessary and desirable process, as human destiny itself. (p.1)

Help offered through the development process is ostensibly designed to end cycles of poverty, social injustice and oppression. However, it is problematic to apply Northern worldviews and values as solutions to Southern problems that derive from a colonial legacy and neoliberal globalization. Blinded by their own benevolence and altruistic gifts of help, money and time, individuals and organizations of the North often lack the knowledge and understanding of the people and places they are

attempting to help and fail to examine their own complicity in forms of power and domination. Hence, those in the South are uncritically expected to adopt the norms established by those in the more powerful North.

As previously mentioned, there has been significant growth in the number of NGOs working on various global issues. Smith (2004) discusses the tensions and contradictions NGOs encounter, as well as how such organizations rather than governments become the public faces for development. Often NGOs are lauded for their benevolent efforts, rather than questioned on how they might be implicated in perpetuating global inequality. Large NGOs come to define the meaning of development through their “marketing, fundraising and education work, as well as in partnerships with the media and other organizations” (Smith, 2004, p. 742). While promoting a community-based agenda for the South, NGOs are required to compete in a market for charitable donations that demands an individualistic consumer-based approach. Such an approach makes it difficult to enlarge political consciousness and engage in political action. Cameron and Haanstra (2008) argue, it is “important to analyze the strategies of representation employed by development organizations precisely because these organizations have the power to control the ways in which they represent their own work and the people in the global South” (1477). The public face and language of NGOs can hinder a power analysis by masking contradictory ideas or alternatives to apolitical, consumer-oriented approaches to development (Wallace, 1997).

The critical literature of development also highlights the complexities of the act of helping at an international level, demonstrating that it is not as altruistic as

one might expect. Most often, the help delivered through international development has been heavily influenced by economic and imperial interests emanating from the global North, perpetuating an imbalance of power and global social injustice.

Throughout this thesis, I will unpack FTC's rhetoric of help to generate more critical understandings of the actions of youth 'helpers' in the global context. FTC's rhetoric encompassing small, feel-good consumerist helping activities will be explored to understand the extent to which it contributes to educating youth about the root causes of global social injustice.

Summary of Chapters

This introductory chapter has presented an overview of the FTC organization, explaining how the young founder, Craig Kielburger, was inspired to gather a group of friends to help less fortunate children around the world. The question of FTC's rhetoric was raised to highlight the need to interrogate the ways in which FTC promotes its message of social justice and development online. In addition, a brief overview of recent scholarship related to the discourses most frequently used by FTC was provided.

Chapter Two provides an explanation of critical rhetorical analysis and the way in which it will be employed to analyze the most prominent discourses of FTC. The methodology of this thesis is detailed, including an explanation of the process of primary source selection, the parameters for collecting data and considerations related to working with websites as a primary source. In this chapter, I also

examine my own positionality as a privileged citizen of the global North and an educator who supports global social activism.

Chapter Three examines how FTC uses rhetoric of participation and empowerment to convey notions of partnership as a means of attracting youth to the organization. My analysis interrogates whether FTC's promotional material actually provides an adequate foundation that enables participants to develop a critical analysis of global inequities thereby enabling them to become effective agents of change. This chapter further explores how the organization uses the images of children of the South, as well as representations of innocence, to appeal to Northern youths' sense of obligation to improve the lives of 'others'. Additionally, Chapter Three examines how the combination of text and images may encourage specific actions at the expense of an analysis of the underpinnings of structural and global inequalities. FTC's failure to equip young people with the opportunity and conceptual tools to understand how their own actions are implicated in maintaining global injustice and inequality is a theme that is identified and continues throughout subsequent chapters.

Chapter Four investigates how FTC positions young people as global citizens, a complex concept that is often linked to a sense of cultural superiority of privileged Northerners. Promoting a sense of global inclusiveness, oneness and belonging, FTC's rhetoric suggests that global injustice can be overcome by simply participating in the organization's development programs. This chapter explores how FTC promotes its brand, through activities such as fundraising and travel adventures as a way of 'helping'. Although these actions may be useful for

developing global connections and can lead to the development of a 'global citizen' identity among participants, the particular form of global citizenship that is cultivated will be interrogated relative to more social justice-oriented versions of social justice.

Chapter Five unpacks the ways in which systems of aid enable Northern helpers to maintain their privileged position of power, while Southern recipients are framed as objects, and in need of protection. Further, this chapter explores FTC's rhetoric surrounding small, feel-good consumerist helping activities and the extent to which they contribute to educating youth about the root causes of global social injustice. FTC's rhetoric related to 'helping' is examined to determine how FTC seeks to motivate and position young people as helpers.

Chapter Six concludes by offering a possible alternative approach that FTC could adopt to encourage young people to conceptualize their role in the global context. Acknowledging the capacity of young people to create change when given the appropriate tools and opportunity, I offer suggestions regarding how to begin discussions with young people to help them understand how they are implicated in global issues of social injustice. These alternatives are not intended to be a panacea, rather they are offered as a starting point for more sustained conversations leading to the creation of deeper awareness.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

Critical Rhetorical Analysis

According to Hart and Daughton (2005), the art of rhetoric is to tell a story with a purpose using “common ideas, conventional language, and specific information to influence audiences’ feeling and behaviours” (p. 7). To achieve this the rhetor engages in five basic moves:

(1) the rhetor tries to exert change by using symbols (verbal and nonverbal communication) rather than non-symbolic forces (like guns or torture); (2) the rhetor must come to be regarded as a helper rather than an exploiter; (3) the rhetor must convince the audience that new choices be made; (4) the rhetor must narrow the audience’s options for making these choices, even though (5) the rhetor may become subtle by not specifying the details of the policies advocated. (Hart and Daughton, 2005, p.7)

A critical rhetorical analysis is useful in showing how FTC uses rhetorical strategies, such as those mentioned above, to convey messages that include global citizenship, helping and social justice in an attempt to engage young people in furthering the work of the organization.

FTC’s website lends itself to a critical rhetorical analysis as the rhetoric in its online material is used to capture the attention of young people and arouse their interest in global social justice. As Hart and Daughton (2005) note in the quote above, a key rhetorical move is to persuade the audience that a new choice must be made and to then guide and constrain that choice. I will examine FTC’s website to determine kinds of choice FTC offers for engaging with international development. Further, I will assess the extent to which FTC’s rhetoric offers viewers the choice to engage with international development from a critical perspective. This analysis

will then be used to more fully explore the ways in which FTC operationalizes such concepts as empowerment, global citizenship, and help, terms which are repeatedly used on its website.

A critical rhetorical analysis identifies parts of text and interprets the meaning of textual components that have been designed to persuade the author's target audience. Zachry (2009) views such an analysis as "require[ing] the analyst to address the effects of the different identified textual elements on the perception of the person experiencing the text" (p. 69). As most texts use multiple rhetorical strategies, an analysis requires exploring the cumulative effects of the messages in the text (Zachry, 2009). Identifying the elements of multi-dimensional texts is important in attempting to uncover the rhetor's message.

New media technologies such as You Tube, Facebook and other forms of social media have allowed FTC to disseminate its outreach material to an expansive audience. Chana (2007) argues that in order for young people to become interested and remain engaged in organizations, various modes of media such as websites, videos, music and social media must be employed. FTC's website, the main source for its communication materials, is a perfect example of how different genres of text and media are blended together to create stories and messages about how the organization, with the assistance of Canadian youth, can bring substantial global social justice to the people of the global South.

The study of visual persuasion is considered relatively new. Authors such as Hart and Daughton (2005) note that mass media has changed the way people receive and learn new information. Due to the ubiquitous nature of mass media and

the repetition of certain messages, audiences tend to put faith in the authenticity and authority of the source. The combination of textual components such as text, images, audio and video bolster the ability of the rhetor to influence and persuade its audience.

Hart and Daughton (2005), further claim that applying a critical rhetorical analysis to the Internet, also relatively new, requires that certain considerations be made. For instance, they suggest that it is necessary to identify how online sources borrow from different genres such as written text, audio, video, etc. Additionally, they recommend exploring any attempts that have been made by online sources to solicit a particular audience, i.e. required memberships, links, mass mailings, etc. Whether the online source invites active participation and how this level of interactivity may influence or discourage its audience is another consideration.

Examining rhetoric requires viewing both the message and those behind the message through a critical lens. A critical approach requires us to identify, examine and deconstruct the multitude of messages that we are inundated with everyday. Hart and Daughton (2005) assert that in order to critically assess rhetoric, one must be able to stand “simultaneously in the midst of and apart from the events experienced” (p. 23). As Carroll (2004) argues, this detachment is necessary as the key reason to be critical is to understand that the world is “marked by extreme inequities and injustices, and that our knowledge of ourselves is caught up in those very practices and structures of inequality and domination” (p. 2). The goal of the critic in this instance is to create social justice out of injustice.

Data

Primary Source

FTC and founder Craig Kielburger use a number of approaches to promote the work done by the organization both domestically and internationally. Kielburger and FTC have published several books, developed an interactive website, used Facebook and Twitter accounts, created a FTC YouTube channel, blogs and electronic newsletters and televised events such as We Day celebrations. In addition, Craig and his brother Marc have written weekly columns for national newspapers, created a specially designed curriculum for educators to incorporate FTC in school programming, and established a storefront in Toronto, Ontario. I have chosen to focus on FTC's website as the primary source of data for the following reasons. First, the website provides a comprehensive overview of the history of the organization, the services it provides both domestically and internationally and how individuals may get involved. Second, the website is fully accessible to all and does not require users to provide any personal information before accessing the material. Thirdly, FTC's website is a rich source of data used to promote the organization including text, images, and video. This will provide the basis for a critical rhetorical analysis which will explore how FTC uses the rhetorical moves to promote its online message of social justice and development.

FTC's website is dynamic, interactive and embodies many of the features identified by Chana (2007) as effective in engaging young people. The organization's home page includes the FTC logo in the top left corner and six links

across the top of the page that include “About Us”, “International Programming”, “Domestic Programming”, “Get Involved”, “Donate” and “Craig and Marc”. The rest of the page is divided into four sections, with the first being positioned directly below the text at the top of the page. Here a banner displays five rotating images that include text in various colours and fonts, live links and images. These images represent specific programs that FTC features, as well as updates on upcoming events. These images change depending on what programs or events the organization is promoting. To the left of the rotating banner is a box titled “Make a donation”. The “Donate Now” link is distinguished from the other opportunities to donate by being highlighted in green and shaped like an arrow.

The subsequent portion of the webpage provides the viewer an opportunity to investigate two different topics. The first topic is “Get Involved: Initiatives and Campaigns”, where current campaigns are described and links are provided for a more detailed description. There is a link that leads the viewer to the FTC blog and a link that provides information on how to donate. The second topic is “Learn More: International Programming”. Here viewers have the option of following links to learn more about the impact of international programming, as well as FTC’s organizational model and the geographic location in which it works. As with the first topic, the viewer has the option of clicking on a number of images to get a more detailed description of the work FTC undertakes.

The third section of the page provides the reader with updates on domestic and international initiatives. For example, a specific school’s fundraising efforts or the opening of a new school might be highlighted in this section. The final section

provides a brief overview of FTC, Me to We and We Day, with links connecting to the organization's website, Facebook page, YouTube channel and Twitter account.

Overall, the home page of the website is very easy to navigate and provides the viewer with many opportunities to learn more about who FTC is and the work that it does.

Data Selection

This research used a qualitative and inductive approach. Due to the number of links and the layering of information on the website, a careful examination of the material was required. Each link needed to be explored to determine the most prominent and recurring rhetoric appearing in text, images and video. It was necessary to keep both paper and electronic copies of the data sources, to ensure information was not lost due to changes made to the website.

Analysis is a dynamic process that requires the researcher to be fully immersed in the data in order to brainstorm, try different ideas, eliminate those that do not fit and expand on others (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Based on my guiding questions, I explored FTC's website looking at the various types of data (text, images and video) simultaneously, identifying particular key words, concepts, categories or themes. I repeated reading over the website until the most pervasive themes were identified. After identifying the most ubiquitous rhetoric throughout the organization's website, I organized the data into thematic areas. Further, retaining copies of the data sources also allowed me to track the amount of material I had selected. Additionally, this allowed me to identify any overlap of themes that occurred as well as the variety of rhetorical strategies used by FTC. Data collection

ceased once it became evident that no new themes were emerging and each theme was significantly developed. Finally, once themes were established I selected items from the website that most illustrated those themes.

As Huckin (2002) notes, it is of equal importance to identify what information has been omitted or silenced as what is published and visible. For example, while FTC works in a number of countries, including Ecuador, Haiti and rural China, a large number of images used on the organization's website highlight individuals and projects from the African continent. This observation is significant as Africa is often romanticized as a distant and exotic land. Cohen and Manspeizer (2009) note that a romanticized view of Africa perpetuates myths of a continent that is traditional and locked in the past, exotic, primitive, with a wild and rugged landscape. Following Huckin's (2002) call for identifying that which is silenced or omitted, it became apparent that the frequency of images depicting Africa misrepresents the global scope of initiatives being undertaken by FTC. FTC's choice to disproportionately highlight images depicting Africa may be understood as a rhetorical strategy to engage viewers who are associate pervasive poverty with the African continent.

Analyzing the various modes of data found on FTC's website required careful attention to the rhetorical strategies used in varying forms of communication. Videos are an important way for FTC to disseminate its mission and operations to young participants. Pollack (2009) highlights several considerations when exploring video data. Due to the variety of ways messages can be conveyed (through images, sounds, framing etc.), it is necessary to be aware of the complexity

of possible messages. In addition, analysis of actors' verbal utterances must be accompanied by a consideration of sounds, accompanying images and gestures by the actors, the thematic structures of the video, rhythm, and the order or succession of the shots. Further, the intention of the film-maker needs to be contextualized within the "historical and institutional roots and its potential political and societal impact" (Pollack, 2009, p. 94), as I do in the analysis of FTC's videos.

Like videos, visual images should also be viewed through a critical lens. While images can act as narratives, presenting actions and suggesting processes of change (Pollack, 2009), proper analysis requires attention to who has taken the image, who is using the image and for what purpose the image is being used. Loizos (2000) reminds us that an image offers a snapshot of an action or an event but does not depict what has happened prior to, or after, a specific image has been captured. Further a static image is only capable of depicting a specific frame, excluding that which lies beyond. For example, many youth-focused NGO's show images of youth volunteering in Southern communities building schools. Youth are often depicted shoveling dirt, moving bricks, and smiling, and all appear to be working collaboratively with their peers. These images capture an event that seems positive, helpful and necessary, and contributes to a larger narrative of the role youth can play in social development.

Applying a critical rhetorical analysis to these images however, raises several questions. For example, who took this picture? Was it taken by one of the youth volunteers as a memento of their experience or did a team member from the organization take it for promotional purposes? Where are the members of the

community for whom the school is being built? What role do community members play in the decision-making about the design, location and construction of the school? What is the relationship of the volunteers to the community? Will the young members build the entire school or are they only responsible for a portion of it? Who is responsible for the daily running and operating costs of the school once it is built? Could the school have been built in other ways, such as by equipping and training local young people or by employing qualified local construction workers? These questions remind us that what we are viewing is decontextualized and therefore cannot convey the complexity of a situation. Instead we are left with an uncomplicated depiction of a successful building project.

Three emergent themes were identified following a thorough analysis of the data. The themes consisted of an emphasis on youth empowerment and participation, youth acting as or being encouraged to act as global citizens, and youth engaging in charitable activities in order to alleviate global injustice and inequalities. These themes are addressed in the following chapters: Youth Participation, Global Citizenship, and Helping. As these topics are closely related, rather than mutually exclusive, the themes interweave throughout the entirety of this thesis.

Considerations

While it is common to apply a critical rhetorical analysis to traditional sources such as newspapers, reports and interviews using the same approach with internet sources such as websites and social media is considered a newer approach

(Hart and Daughton, 2005). Mautner (2005) notes that web-based documents require special consideration. First, web-based sites are ever changing and can be removed or altered without notification. Second, some websites have multiple links leading to additional text that may or may not fit into the analysis. Therefore, it is necessary to be judicious about the quality and amount of data collected. Finally, the multimodality of many websites can make analysis very difficult. Sound, colour, and movement require careful consideration as to how they fit into the analysis. Information gleaned from images, videos and text on web sites does not, as Wehbi et.al (2010) note,

necessarily reflect an accurate picture of an organization's actual beliefs or practices. Nonetheless, considering that documents, such as reports, and newsletters, are meant to present an organization to the public, they stand as concrete textural representations of what an organization deems acceptable and important enough to share. (p.417)

This thesis is designed to explore the messages that FTC chooses to convey to construct its public image. Acknowledging that the content of FTC's website is continually evolving, this project is designed to reflect a snapshot of the organization's outreach material.

I must acknowledge that my own positionality will be evident in the data collection and how the data is interpreted. As Carroll (2004) states, it is important that the researcher "sees that [their] world is marked by extreme inequities and injustices, and that our knowledge of ourselves and that world is caught up in those very practices and structures of inequality and domination" (p. 2). The purpose of my research is to unmask and describe what is occurring within FTC, a youth-driven

international development organization, and propose possible strategies the organization could adopt to overcome identified limitations.

I also acknowledge that I enter into this research as a person who has many forms of privilege, which include my race, class, age, and geographic location. My geographic and class locations position me as a citizen of the global North with power to choose how I direct my benevolent and altruistic actions. As an educator, I value and encourage young people to act as agents of change working towards the emancipation of their own voices. As Chana (2007) states, “contrary to popular assumptions, children are aware and have an age-appropriate understanding of the macro world they live within well before reaching adolescence” (p. 5). Children also possess the ability to transcend the borders placed around them by adult-led institutional practices. As a parent, I am encouraged by the camaraderie and inspiration provided by youth-focused organizations such as FTC. However, my role as a parent and guardian requires me to question the role that FTC takes in educating my child and others about the deeper systemic and institutional inequalities that are responsible for further marginalizing groups of people.

CHAPTER THREE: YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Young People's Voices Being Heard

Free The Children has two parts to its mandate. Freeing kids internationally from poverty, exploitation, the lack of access to education. And at home [Canada], it is freeing kids from the idea they are too young to make a difference, and then we bring those two together through service opportunities, through unique campaigns and through a high transparency model where young people learn, touch and feel the projects they supported. It's truly children helping children around the world.

Meet Marc and Craig Kielburger, YouTube, 2013

FTC is known for its unique approach of 'children helping children'. The organization has developed strategies for encouraging young people to participate in the public sphere. This chapter will explore whether FTC's promotional materials are designed to prepare young to understand systems of global inequity adequately by fostering critical thinking skills among participants. Further, this chapter will more closely examine the ways in which the rhetoric of empowerment, participation, hope and change is used in its online materials to encourage young people to become involved. In addition, I will explore the ways in which notions of childhood and innocence are projected onto Southern children through FTC's use of images.

The rhetoric of the YouTube video cited above creates an illusion of two distinct groups: the young helpers living in the North and the children in need of intervention in the South. This approach to youth participation challenges traditional constructions of Northern young people as passive, uninformed, uninvolved, and distracted from current global issues due to a consumption-based lifestyle.

FTC has created a platform from which young people can become involved in issues dealing with social justice at both a local and global level. FTC is at the forefront of youth-focused NGOs and has positioned itself as a leader in providing youth with an opportunity to become active participants in issues of social justice and global inequalities. FTC's partnership with over fifty Canadian school boards and districts including the Ministries of Education in British Columbia, Ontario and Manitoba legitimizes the organization and young peoples' participation and actions as safe and acceptable.

Active engagement in the public sphere is significant according to Taft (2011), as youth are excluded political subjects and are generally marginalized within formal politics and social movements. Their subordinate relationship with adults, authority and educational institutions has a direct impact on how youth participate in the public sphere. As Kennelly (2011) notes, young people are constructed as dependent in the North and when they attempt to assert their independence by claiming their rights or speaking out, many adults can become uncomfortable by this perceived threat to adult authority. FTC appears to have created a positive, supportive and collaborative environment for youth to enact their agency.

One way the organization fosters agency is through initiatives such as We Act and We Schools in Action programs, facilitated by educators and educational institutions. Both programs are designed to:

[inspire] a generation to care about social justice and [provide] the practical tools to turn that inspiration into action. They are designed to enhance your school's existing social initiatives or to spark new ones. Through the program, school communities are transformed by positive

changes in student behaviour, heightened student engagement and the belief that it's cool to care.

Free The Children/Get Involved/We School

The school-focused programs provide a full year agenda that includes services such as educational and online resources, outreach speeches that focus on specific topics, in-school action planning workshops designed to help students achieve their year-in-action goals, as well as educator development resources, all followed by an annual We Day celebration (We Day/We Act/What is We Act). Schools are a logical venue where FTC can generate interest for social justice causes among young people, offering them a way to get involved in issues that are conventionally perceived as the purview of adults. Through school-based initiatives, FTC provides a gateway for youth to become involved in clearly defined activities that are intended to create an awareness of local and global issues. School networks “provide a ready made pool of people to draw upon to assist with actions or attend meetings, people who already share worldviews and values and [can] be relied upon” (Kennelly, 2011, p. 124). FTC invites youth into the ‘activist’ field by providing projects consistent with the image of a non-threatening ‘Good Citizen’.

The organization encourages youth to join:

The movement of our time—a movement of young people leading local and global change... [because they believe that they are] ...the first generation that can truly end the worst forms of poverty, embrace We thinking and We acting and remove the barriers to youth being agents of social change. And there's no time to waste: every single day we have the opportunity to make this world a better place. And everyone has a role to play.

(We Day/What is We day/Our-story)

Thus, FTC claims to create opportunity for young people to take action within the public sphere, thereby allowing them to demonstrate their agency, which is often rendered invisible and underestimated by society.

Participation in the Public Sphere

FTC encourages and creates many opportunities for young people to contribute their knowledge, skills and energy to support the organization's domestic and international initiatives. It achieves participation through rhetorical appeals to the value of education, engagement and empowerment. In particular, FTC encourages active participation through its Domestic Programming Model. As Ansell (2005) notes, children are routinely viewed as inarticulate and unable to express their views, thus seeming to require adults to speak for them. Offering a similar critique, FTC recognizes that traditional charities focus on "children and young people as recipients of aid, as problems to be solved" (Free The Children, Domestic Programming, Our Impacts). Setting itself apart from other youth focused NGOs, FTC "proudly believes that youth can be the greatest problem solvers. Instead of making the world a better place *for* our children, we know we can make our world *with* our children." (Free The Children/domestic-programming/our-impacts [emphasis in original]). By selectively referring to children, FTC is able to make the claim that they are supporting *children's* participation when, in fact, many of its activities actually involve youth. By conflating the categories of children and youth in the quote above, FTC is able to project a particular image of the

organization and its work where Northern *'youth'* are agents of change for Southern *'children'*.

The reason this conflation occurs is related to the differing terminology used for these age groups. In common parlance, the term child generally refers to those roughly up to the age of 12. However, in official policy, such as the CRC, the term *'children'* is used to denote those 0-18 years of age. Hence, it is often not clear which language is being used in any given situation. For the purposes of this research, it is being argued that FTC strategically uses language to convey the impression that children, those 12 and younger, make up the majority of the organization's participants, when in actual fact, the majority of participants fit into the category of youth, aged 13-18.

The ideal of youth agency however, is not without its tensions. While FTC promotes the idea of *'children helping children'* and provides youth with opportunities to be active in the public sphere, the organization seldom acknowledges the involvement of adults. FTC's leadership comes from young people whose status is blurring into adulthood. For example, Craig Keilburger himself just turned 30 in 2012. Given the elasticity of the definitions of youth, the organization is able to promote itself as *'youth-led'*. An emphasis on youth, as Kirshner (2007) observes, "obscures the fact that activism groups typically embody cross age collaborations in which young adults (mostly in their twenties) play critical roles as organizers and advisors" (p. 370). FTC is no exception as it recruits new university graduates and career professionals such as teachers, investment bankers, graphic designers and journalists to work for the organization (FTC, About

Us, Careers). Hence, dependent on the context and definition being used, those beyond their teen years may be conceptualized as youth or alternatively as adults. Despite these contradictions, FTC appears unique in that it relies heavily on youth and encourages young people to raise awareness in areas such as international development and global injustice, traditionally viewed as adult responsibilities.

FTC frames many global issues, such as poverty, inequality and injustice, as the responsibility of young people, who are regularly referred to as leaders of today, change-makers, etc. In turn, these assumed responsibilities can be viewed as the impetus for youth participation. FTC encourages members to see themselves as being at “the forefront of service and leadership and that their actions truly create the change that we wish to see in our world” (FTC, Get Involved, Ways to get involved). Such ideas of participation are in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC states that children should have the opportunity to participate in decision-making that affects them as individuals, that the activities and decisions children make are directly related to other children and adults, and that children have the right to express their ideas freely (Ansell, 2005; Covell and Howe, 2001).

There are many examples in FTC’s promotional materials that encourage local and global participation of young people. Under a photo (see Figure 3.1) of thirteen enthusiastic looking young people there is a caption that encourages youth to join “[a] network of young people committed to creating long-term sustainable change. Together you can work towards effective solutions” (Free The Children/Get Involved/We Youth/Impact Lives). Further emphasizing the need to participate in

creating local and global change, four suggestions are listed on the 'Ways to get Involved' page on the organization's website. The first suggestion is found under 'Campaigns' where members are encouraged to engage with the variety of campaigns supported by FTC to discover what issues they are passionate about. The second suggestion is to 'Fundraise'. Youth are encouraged to organize fundraising events in order to support FTC programs that operate at the local and global level. They are told that with the money they raise, they are helping to impact lives around the world. Third is the suggestion to 'Involve your community'. Here young people are directed to reach out to personal and professional networks to raise awareness about social issues they are passionate about. Finally, readers are told to 'Live Me to We'. This involves living a socially conscious lifestyle by exploring and incorporating Me to We products, services, and experiences into their lives.



Figure 3.1 Impact Lives. From the Free The Children website, January, 2013 from <http://www.freethechildren.com/get-involved/we-youth/impact-lives/>

As demonstrated above, FTC has created several opportunities for young people to actively participate in their communities in very public ways. Kennelly

(2011) notes this participation is encouraged so long as it does not challenge the state. Hence, FTC's partnership with school boards serves to ensure the activities undertaken are overseen by adults. Referring to Kirshner's (2007) assertion that most youth-focused organizations generally have a cross representation of ages working to meet their mandates, FTC's extensive partnership with adult led-school boards and schools raises questions as to the depth of autonomy and understanding young people have when tackling issues of global injustice, inequalities and oppression through FTC's campaigns and products. The rhetoric suggests that FTC fosters children's agency. However, by blurring the categories of children and youth and masking the ways in which extensive adult involvement may drive the organization, the authenticity of children's participation is called into question.

While youth participation is lauded as the driving force behind the success of the organization, the ways in which youth participation is encouraged in relation to local and global issues appears limited. FTC places an emphasis on awareness-raising activities such as buying fair trade products, exploring other cultures, fundraising for various FTC campaigns or taking travel adventures to countries in which the organization works. Several of these activities are explored further in chapters four and five. Although the organization highlights youth leadership, initiative and action consistently throughout its promotional materials, it is necessary to question the extent to which youth have input regarding the forms that their participation will take. The rhetoric of 'children helping children' serves to obscure the involvement of older youth, who by some definitions would not truly fit

the definition of 'children'. Similarly, adults are more integral to the functioning of FTC than is suggested in its online materials.

Images of the Northern Child Projected on to the Southern Subject

In the nineteenth century, childhood was newly constructed as a distinct life stage in order to shield children from the burden of work, care and responsibility, while creating a space for formal education and play (Corsaro, 2011). Ansell (2005) notes that children in Northern societies are protected from adult responsibility by being segregated to home and school, a pattern justified by beliefs about what is required for children's emotional well-being and development. Northern norms about childhood perpetuate a belief that children who do not have access to similar life circumstances are disadvantaged and therefore require intervention. Such universal models of childhood and rights of the child continue to dominate Northern based NGO practice and policy towards children in the South (Ansell, 2005; Burman, 1995; Hart, 2008).

FTC explicitly positions itself as an organization that incorporates young people's views regarding how to address local and global injustice. Specifically, it highlights its inclusive approach and partnership with youth domestically. As previously noted, FTC attempts to distinguish its approach from that of other NGOs by highlighting its position that children and youth are capable of contributing to solving the world's problems. Despite the rhetoric of partnership, FTC's assertion that the organization is different from other charities does not prevent dominant ideas of Northern childhood from infiltrating its programming. Throughout its

promotional material FTC often projects Northern discourses of childhood onto recipient children in the global South. For instance, FTC's portrayals of children and young people depict them as being educated in a manner similar to the Northern context (Figure 3.2). The organization also relies heavily on images of children at play (Figure 3.3), as well as in the care of Northern development workers (Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.2 A Day at School. From the Free The Children website. February, 2013.
<http://www.freethechildren.com/international-programming/photo-gallery/>.

The discourse of the universal child, according to Burman (1995) “implies that all children share the same attributes and the same needs” (p. 22) constructing children of the global South as mirror images of Canadian youth. Consequently, the construction of childhood creates an assumption that “if the person I am doing good to resembles me and has my rights, he or she will be better off” (Spivak, cited in Jefferess, 2002, p. 13). Invoking a model of the universal child is an effective strategy for FTC, as it reminds young participants of their own lifestyles and

privileges, and plays on their desire to help children in the global South reach a similar existence.



Figure 3.3 Best Friends. From the Free the Children website February 2013. <http://www.metowe.com/about-us/our-organization/social-enterprise-an-innovative-new-model/>

As many have noted, comparing notions of childhood in Northern and Southern contexts is problematic as the former are generally grounded in white middle-class norms (Ansell, 2005; Burman, 1995; Jefferess, 2002; Hart, 2008). First, problems such as poverty, malnourishment, and lack of education are individualized and attributed to some level of dysfunction. Children who are viewed as living in poverty, lacking food security or not having access to education are constructed as abnormal and in need of individualized help. A continued focus on individuals fails to address the significance of broader social, economic and political differences experienced across various locales. Second, the universal model places the responsibility of the child onto the family. If the child is considered lacking, then the family is blamed. Ideas of childhood are measured against the benchmarks of the North and are laden with the expectation that children should be cared for and protected by the nuclear family. This position neglects to acknowledge cultural

differences in expectations of children throughout the global South. Third, due to the tendency to individualize difficulties faced by children, and to place responsibility on the family, the child of the South is constructed as innocent, apolitical and separate from the economic system (Batty, 1999; Burman, 1995). Hence, children become devoid of culture and politics allowing NGOs to focus on issues that are seen as non-political and uncontroversial, rather than address the historical underpinnings of global poverty, oppression and injustice.

Representations of Innocence



Figure 3.4 Craig and Marc Kielburger. From the Free The Children website, February, 2013 from <http://www.freethechildren.com/our-founders-craig-and-marc/>

The Northern construction of childhood is predicated on the idea that children, ideally free from work and adult responsibility, are dependent and innocent requiring protection and care. Manzo (2008), in reference to imagery used by NGOs, explains how images of innocent children hold the attention of Northern audiences by appealing to parental responsibilities of providing care and protection. While FTC's promotional material is targeted primarily at youth, it can

be argued that youth have similar reactions as adults when presented with images of children from the global South, and hence, Manzo's (2008) argument applies. Feelings of connectedness are also essential for motivating people to make donations and commit emotionally to a cause. In other words, people are more likely to give to or help a person with whom they can easily identify. FTC's ubiquitous depictions of innocent children being cared for by Northerners (see Figure 3.4) connect with participants' own beliefs of how childhood should be experienced, compelling them to commit money, time and resources to support the organization's mission.

FTC's use of 'innocent' imagery is reminiscent of what Manzo (2008) refers to as "the colonial principle of guardianship". The message is that colonized people require intervention and guardianship from more civilized Northerners in the same way that young people require guidance from their parents. FTC routinely displays images of a lone child or children of the global South without the accompaniment of an adult caregiver (see Figure 3.5).



Figure 3.5 Water Initiative. From the Free The Children website February, 2013. <http://www.freethechildren.com/get-involved/campaigns/>

Focusing on lone children gives the impression of vulnerability and the need for outside protection and care, demonstrating the power and importance of external forces such as Northern based NGOs. The absence of any depiction of kinship groups or broader community involvement indicates to the viewer that adults in the child's life are unable to secure adequate provisions and resources for the child. The rhetoric of innocence, dependence and protection in relation to peoples of the global South has long been associated with colonial ideology where the connection between the developed and non-developed resembles a parent-child relationship (Manzo, 1991; Manzo, 2008). Additionally, Burman (1994) states that:

Imagery of children works to confirm the failures of the rest of their peoples and cultures to provide for them. The relationship thus established mirrors that of colonial paternalism and the corresponding infantilisation of the peoples of those countries in receipt of aid. (p. 253)

Despite the best intentions of FTC, the organization's choices in utilizing images of children along with its primary focus on the needs of the child are not neutral and serve to reinforce colonial ideologies. Positions of privilege, domination, power and imperial superiority work hand in hand with the iconography of the Southern child.

Empowerment

FTC does not define the term empowerment, although this is not unusual in the literature pertaining to work undertaken by NGOs. According to the Oxford dictionary, empowerment means to "give authority or power to do something" or to "make someone more confident in controlling their life or claiming their rights" (oxforddictionary.com). FTC's rhetoric of empowerment seeks to persuade youth

that they, as members of the organization, will become capable of creating change through meaningful participation. Young people want to engage in activities that move beyond mere tokenism and be recognized as making a genuine difference to their local and global communities (Gordon and Taft, 2010; Kirshner, 2007; Oates, 2004). When youth feel empowered and are provided with the tools and supportive environments that foster positive contributions they are more likely to remain committed to their cause (Oates, 2004).

FTC gains loyal members through its rhetoric of empowerment, which reinforces the perception that it can provide participants with opportunities to be “change makers”. Here are a few examples of how the promise of empowerment appears in FTC’s promotional material. Each example illustrates something about the meaning or process of empowerment for FTC.

Although the first example does not include the word empowerment, it suggests how the process comes about:

After gaining in-depth knowledge about issues and engaging in year-long social action through our experiential learning opportunities, young people become the ambassadors for change. They gain confidence in their abilities, harness their power of “we” and form a support network that is equipped to lead to meaningful change.

Free The Children/Domestic Programming/Our Model

This first example demonstrates the often repeated claim that youth become ‘empowered’ to make change after acquiring in-depth knowledge gained through a year of social action. Although youth are encouraged to act, the specific activities that purportedly empower them are largely scripted by adults. This raises the question of the extent to which adults are able to confer power onto youth. The process by

which adults contribute to empowering youth is not detailed in the promotional material.

A second example of the promise of empowerment appears in the 'Our Mission, Our Model' section of the organization's website:

An international charity and educational partner, Free The Children believes in a world where all young people are free to achieve their fullest potential as agents of change. We work to empower youth to remove barriers that prevent them from being active local and global citizens.

Free The Children/About Us/Our Model

We may challenge the proclamation that youth are empowered to make these changes, as FTC does not provide substantial opportunities for a critical analysis of the systemic barriers that prevent many youth "from being active local and global citizens".

In the third example, the North is implicated in perpetuating the dependence of the South on the North.

It starts at home: Domestic programs and campaigns engage youth, empowering them to raise awareness and funds for families around the world.

Free The Children/About Us/Our Model

This final example is rather ambiguous as it states that awareness and funds need to be raised for families around the world. While youth are encouraged to feel empowered to make change, participants of FTC are not informed as to why families might need their help or which families specifically require the intervention of the North. Hence, we may question the extent of this empowerment and how it might be undermined, as participants may not fully be aware of the reasons that their help is needed.

Depending on our definition of empowerment, we may disagree on the extent to which FTC's activities are preparing youth to bring about meaningful change. Within the broader context of FTC's materials, this rhetoric of empowerment excuses young people working with the organization from having to consider specific causes of global inequality, poverty and oppression and how they might be implicated in such actions. All three of these examples are representative of a 'soft' approach to empowerment taken by FTC. The organization's online promotional material presents opportunities for empowerment that Finnegan (2013) calls 'non-wave making', that promotes legal and safe forms of institutional engagement. What appears to be lacking is a more robust and critical approach to empowerment that would encourage young people to engage in actions that address global inequities.

According to Taft (2011) youth empowerment "is often concerned with incorporating youth into the social order, rather than empowering them to make any meaningful change to the social order" (p. 24). Yet, youth who work towards substantive social change are often constructed as rebellious (Kennelly, 2011). FTC circumvents the "bad activist" label by promoting activities perceived by adults as appropriate for youth. Acceptable activities include coin drives, bake sales and car washes that support existing programs in the organization, including travelling overseas to build schools. These actions, while contributing to short term changes and providing assistance to people in distress, do not address the need for long-term solutions, such as challenging government policy and corporate exploitation that entrap people in continuous cycles of poverty and global injustice and oppression. Although young people are empowered to act, this empowerment is

superficial, as they are not equipped or encouraged to challenge systems of oppression.

Hope For the Future

Youth who engage in social justice efforts are often viewed as hopeful and idealistic. The discourse of hope is what drives many contemporary social movements and FTC capitalizes on the energy and idealism of youth who join the organization. Mobilizing utopian imagining not only inspires individual action but motivates young people to “carry on with the task of organizing to create a better world” (Taft, 2011, p. 174). Throughout its promotional materials, FTC infuses positive and hopeful sentiments into its messages and projects.



Figure 3.6 We Create Change. From the Free The Children website February 2013. <http://www.freethechildren.com/get-involved/campaigns/>

There are problems with relying heavily on such a ‘feel-good’ approach when engaging youth in activist or awareness work. First, an emphasis on hope facilitates the denial of more troubling and complex elements that maintain social injustices and inequalities. By highlighting only the positive, youth are given the message that solving issues such as global poverty can be relatively straightforward. By denying the complex and interconnected nature of oppressions, youth are at risk of developing a naïve understanding of the realities of global inequalities. Ultimately, this sets young people up for a sense of futility once they become aware of the limitations of their efforts and ability to enact change through simplistic activities such as bake sales and coin drives. This sense of futility may set in as young people are not being shown more effective ways to act, collectively and politically.

Humanitarian approaches that focus on ‘doing good’ or creating awareness do not acknowledge or engage with the complexities of power relations or inequality. This optimistic perspective “fails to recognize the more systemic, complex, and deeply rooted problems of social injustice” (Taft, 2011, p. 170). Further, Jefferess (2012) notes that instead of providing multiple viewpoints and voices, focusing on the benefactor “reinforces the message that ‘making a difference’ leads to personal happiness” (p. 25).

The rhetoric of hopefulness further enables the organization to avoid engaging in a deeper analysis of development practices and the type of change that can reasonably be expected. Messages of hope for a better future appear regularly in FTC’s promotional material, such as the following example.

We work together with communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America to establish a comprehensive, child-focused development approach that

gives all community members the education, skills and opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty—forever.

Free The Children/About Us/Our Model

Highlighting only the positives and focusing on future accomplishments is an effective strategy for avoiding some of the more difficult realities faced by social movements regarding the intractability of poverty and social inequality. The passage above focuses on how working together to eradicate poverty forever creates a sense of hopefulness that all social injustices can be solved through campaigns such as Adopt-A-Village and those mentioned above (see Figure 3.6). While optimism often leads to motivation to act, fostering an awareness of systemic roots of injustice is equally important. Without such awareness, youth are not encouraged to grapple with their complicity in systems that oppress some of the world's most vulnerable. This may consist of something as straightforward as considering how consumer choices may support global inequities.

A focus on systemic forces would enable young people to develop a more comprehensive understanding of global interconnectedness. Without a grounding in the broader context, it is impossible to see beyond their own collective actions. As an interview participant in Taft's (2011) research with young activists notes, "It is only from a position of comfort, stability, and safety that people can ignore the deep and enduring 'bitterness of history' and say that 'things are really getting better everywhere'" (p. 171).

FTC regularly highlights how Northern young people are positively changed though their involvement in FTC programs and initiatives, such as We Act, We Schools in Action and the Adopt A Village program (discussed in later chapters)

rather than those individuals receiving aid from the organization. FTC has positioned itself as the expert voice relaying the benefits of belonging to a benevolent organization, such as becoming empowered and having hope for the future. The voice of the recipient, perhaps the true expert, who has experienced the outcomes of help from Northern organizations, is often relegated to a few testimonials scattered throughout FTC's promotional material. As Razack (2007) notes, in order to view ourselves as compassionate citizens who are far removed from the brutalities of the world, we have come to rely on the images and stories that confirm our own humanitarian character.

CHAPTER FOUR: GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Who is a Global Citizen?

By raising funds and awareness for overseas development, young people are on the forefront of social change; a generation of passionate global citizens with an unstoppable drive to create stronger communities at home and abroad.

Free The Children/donate/Gift-Catalogue

The term 'global citizen' can be found repeatedly throughout FTC's promotional material. The organization provides opportunities for youth to begin developing as, and engaging in activities that characterize, the global citizen. FTC does not provide a working definition of a global citizen. However, Oxfam (2006), an organization with a similar mission and goals, provides the following definition of a global citizen as someone who:

is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen; respects and values diversity; has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally; is outraged by social injustice; participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from local to global; is willing to act to make the world a more sustainable place and; takes responsibility for their actions. (p. 3)

As will be discussed in this chapter, FTC's conception of a global citizen appears to be less robust. Using a model of global citizenship as outlined by Shultz (2007) this chapter will explore the way FTC uses rhetoric of global citizenship and how participants are positioned as 'global change makers'.

Understanding Global Citizenship

As previously noted, despite its frequent use of the term “global citizenship” in its on-line materials, FTC does not specifically define the meaning of the term. As Schultz (2007) has written, educating for global citizenship has become increasingly prevalent over the last decade, both in schools and among NGOs. The definition of the term and the ways in which it is operationalized, however, vary considerably. For the purpose of this thesis, Shultz’s three approaches to conceptualizing global citizenship will be explored to ascertain which is most closely related to the approach engendered by FTC.

The first approach Shultz (2007) identifies is the neoliberal, which is grounded in a particular version of global citizenship:

a neoliberal approach celebrates the dominance of a single global market and the principles of liberal transnational trade. From this perspective, a global citizen is someone who is a successful participant in a liberal economy driven by capitalism and technology. (p. 249)

Neoliberal approaches celebrate capitalism and free market expansion. Those that are able to successfully participate in the global marketplace are lauded, at the expense of acknowledging issues of unequal power between the North and the South. Hence, those in the North are encouraged to interpret their privileged position as “natural” and a “sign of success” (252), rather than contextualizing their position as an outcome of an intricate system of global and structural inequities. This thinking reinforces the neoliberal drive to increase free markets, positing that the lack of capitalist expansion is the fundamental concern. Hence, Shultz suggests that a neoliberal approach to aid and intervention may also serve to meet state

interests, as it provides the foundation for communities to participate in global economic systems.

The interventionist work of NGOs has been “instrumental in bringing the discourse of citizenship to the community level” (Shultz, 2007, p. 250). Assistance in the form of aid contributes to removing barriers to modernization, thereby helping to facilitate neoliberal development. Further, interventions undertaken by NGOs at the local level “engage[] people in actions that both remove barriers to modernization and address problems of neoliberal development such as social disparity and environmental degradation” (p. 250). Often this help is delivered in the form of workers and, or volunteers of NGOs who travel internationally, bringing an agenda for “global development” (p. 250). In other words, whether intentional or not, neoliberal NGOs directly support the political priorities of the developed world.

The influence of neoliberal thought in these NGOs and the alignment of their approaches to ‘activism’ with the current neoliberal economic trends and policies of the state, may not be readily apparent. According to Shultz, neoliberal global citizens are positioned to support aid efforts through charitable donations to “mitigate the suffering” (p. 252) of those in need. What is discouraged is an analysis of the broader context that perpetuates this ongoing need for aid. In other words, such an approach would likely oppose agendas of social or structural change, instead proposing more targeted acts of charity.

In contrast, a radical approach conceptualizes the role of global citizenship much differently, challenging globalization linked to Western imperialism that “uses economic power for domination” (p. 249). A radical approach focuses on issues of

power and access, challenging beliefs that those in the global North can construe their position of privilege as “a natural position and a sign success” (p. 252).

Further, this approach acknowledges the impact of globalization in creating and perpetuating global inequalities. Fundamental to this approach is an understanding of:

how this system [globalization] creates poverty and oppresses most of the world’s population and therefore has a responsibility to challenge state and corporate structures that increase the marginalization of countries in the global south. (Shultz, 2007, p. 249)

Challenging structures that reinforce “the hegemony of economic globalization” (p. 253), as well as structures that perpetuate global inequalities, becomes the primary objective of the radical global citizen. Consequently, this approach prioritizes macro level change, with a focus on challenging such institutions as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization (Schultz, 2007). Shultz identifies this critical consciousness, sense of responsibility and oppositional stance as ‘radical’ global citizenship, in contrast to neoliberal global citizenship.

A third approach to global citizenship is known as transformational. A transformationalist perspective adopts a broader approach, in which “globalization is understood as cultural, social, environmental, and political as well as economic” (p. 249). Notions of shared humanity are fundamental, emphasizing the global citizens’ connection to others across the world. Further, this perspective acknowledges our “connection to all other people through a common humanity, a shared environment, and shared interests and activities” (p. 249). Hence, the need to value diversity and foster equitable and inclusive relationships across national

and international boundaries is highlighted. A central theme involves “creating democratic spaces for building inclusive community, through action that links the local experience with the shared global experience” (p. 255). The fundamental goal of social justice work from a transformational perspective involves eradicating poverty and is grounded in the belief that “a better world is possible” (p. 255).

Using Shultz’s three models of global citizenship the remainder of this chapter will explore how FTC’s rhetoric encourages young people to become agents of change both locally and globally. Meaning of global citizenship will be explored in the context of the organization’s emphasis on apolitical and consumerist approaches to helping. Finally, the ways in which FTC promotes global connections through selective activities and contact with recipients of aid will be interrogated.

Global Citizens Contributing at the Local and Global Level

An apolitical movement

NGOs are key agents in the discursive construction of global citizenship. NGOs help to identify issues that “require and create a global political constituency for their resolution” (Desforges, 2004, p. 552), while utilizing communication and information technologies to transfer knowledge to individuals and the public. The intention of many NGOs is to mediate between supporters domestically and partners in the developing world (Desforges, 2004). FTC is an example of an NGO that engages in rhetoric of global citizenship that leads its members to believe that they are actively involved in a global process that impacts the development and well being of others.

FTC has positioned itself as a bridge that allows young people to enter into public forms of community and global engagement, using schools as a platform to deliver its programming. Capitalizing on existing networks, FTC benefits from the partnership of state-sanctioned educational settings. After-school programs and groups such as We Act and We Schools in Action are established in individual schools. FTC brings these groups together for an annual We Day⁶ event as a way to celebrate the achievements and success of local groups. Although explicitly organized to recognize participants' contributions, this event merits further attention, as it has evolved into a cultural phenomenon, which uses slick marketing and high profile celebrities to elicit an ever-increasing commitment from participants in the organization. We Day events are an excellent example of how the organization seeks to reinforce notions of global citizenship by bringing local groups together and exposing them to a select representation from international projects.

As will be explored later in this chapter, witnessing first hand the impact of charitable efforts creates an assumed connection or relationship between the giver and the receiver. Andreotti (2006) states that the use of images, figures, and slogans can place an emphasis on charitable actions in the hopes of creating change "based on moral obligation to a common humanity, rather than on a political responsibility for the causes of poverty" (42). This reinforces the privileged position of the global citizen, as they are the able to view themselves as able to help those who are perceived as being unable to help themselves.

⁶ We Day celebrations are one day events held in several cities across Canada since 2007 and more recently the U.S.

In the Introduction, I provided a description of a We Day promotional video. FTC uses We Day events to harness the energy, passion and commitment that young people bring to their activist work. The overall positive and collaborative strategies used by FTC are consistent with Chana's (2007) suggested best practices for youth engagement in organizations. On the We Day website FTC states that We Day is, "more than just one day of celebration and inspiration. We Day is the movement of our time - a movement of young people leading local and global change" (Free The Children/About We Day). In We Day's promotional video, young people are told they, "can't buy a ticket to We Day, you earn it through service" (Free The Children/About We Day), and, "We Day is born out of a dream for us to be better and for the world to be better" (ibid). These are but three of many lines repeated in the video that highlight how individual benevolent actions to make the world better are greatly emphasized. The message is skillfully reinforced and glamorized by enlisting the help of world-renowned celebrities and speakers to build the momentum of the movement.

As Locke (2004) notes, using high profile personalities and experts is often an effective means of legitimizing the mission of an organization. In the case of FTC, including celebrities is a highly effective means of capturing young people's attention and ensuring that these events are extremely enticing. The energy at We Day events is visceral and electric. As an adult, I am constantly surprised at my own emotional reaction to the video, which is consistent, despite having been exposed to it many times. It is no surprise that FTC is able to cultivate an optimistic legion of future fundraisers, ready to respond globally to those identified as in need of help.

It is noteworthy that FTC does not encourage its participants to engage politically as a method for advocating for change. Rather than focusing on the broader political and economic context, FTC's rhetoric focuses on encouraging youth to come together and experience a sense of global inclusiveness, oneness and belonging. Participants are described as a generation with unstoppable force at the forefront of social change (Free The Children, 2013). FTC's use of global citizenship rhetoric acts to inspire youth to support and sustain the causes of the organization. Karlberg (2008) notes that the growing number of youth who have been exposed to such rhetoric are eager to participate when provided with a unified vision of humanity. FTC seeks to entice young people to become involved by providing them with an unproblematic approach to solving the world's problems. This apolitical approach appears to avoid engaging in activities that could be viewed as challenging the state.

In this way, FTC's approach is consistent with the neoliberal and transformational models of global citizenship as conceptualized by Schultz but lacks radicalism. FTC's rhetoric around fundraising, consumer based activities and celebrity endorsed events such as We Day, work to build a shared humanity but fail to engage in an analysis or present any challenge to global structures that create inequalities. These are the tenants of a radical approach to global citizenship according to Shultz.

Consumerism as Activism?

In FTC's rhetoric, global problems are not the result of global capitalism but rather the problems of individuals that need our help. Such a limited analysis gives rise to a limited range of responses, such as marketing and fundraising campaigns through the purchase of fair trade goods or holiday shopping. By promoting activities such as fundraising and changes in consumption patterns, youth are encouraged simply to 'get involved' and feel good about their contributions (see Figure 4.1). Although promoting conscious and informed consumer choices is a positive step, FTC does not go as far as to acknowledge that it may represent only one small step towards change. A limitation of such an approach is that an emphasis on consumer-related participation supports individual actions entrenched within neo-liberal ideology. Individualism shifts young people's attention from critically reflecting on broader structural issues, such as the global distribution of wealth.

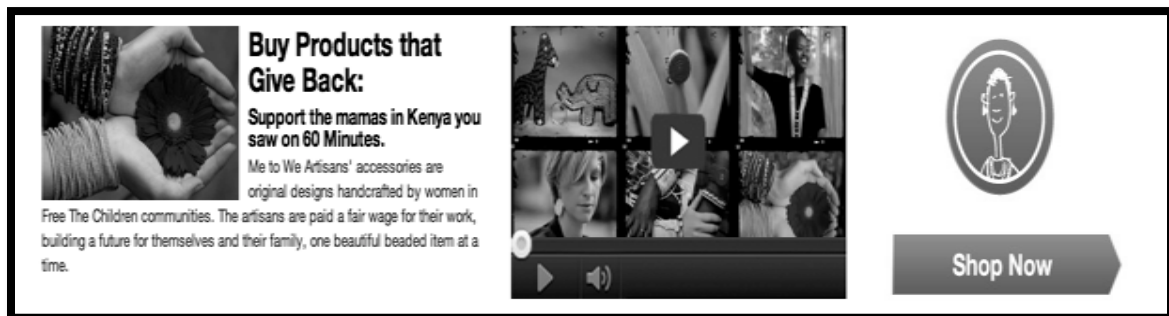


Figure 4.1 Buy Products that Give Back. From the Free the Children Website, January 2013, <http://www.freethechildren.com/60-minutes/>.

Kennelly (2011) contends that youth activist culture in Canada has become inextricably linked to neoliberalism. "The effects of neoliberalism are felt through its emphasis on self-perfection and identity as expressed through consumption practices" (108). Rose (cited in Kennelly, 2007) suggests that notions of the active

citizen are increasingly tied to one's consumption practices. "The citizen is to become a consumer, and his or her activity is to be understood in terms of the activation of the rights of the consumer in the marketplace" (102). Such thinking has resulted in a shift in philosophy, transforming social justice efforts traditionally grounded in a collective philosophy to a more individualized approach, which emphasizes self-regulation and adherence to specific consumption practices. Hence, rather than collective efforts being the primary focus, individual actions are accorded primary importance. This consumer orientation is evident on FTC's website as detailed below.

Global Citizens Acting Locally for Global Change

FTC's promotional material encourages young people to engage in a variety of activities that create awareness and raise funds while highlighting the impact those actions have when carried out by dedicated 'global citizens'. After the organization was featured on the American news program 60 Minutes, an invitation to watch the interview with Craig Kielburger was prominently displayed on the organization's website in a section that features the most current events and programs sponsored by FTC (see Figure 4.2).

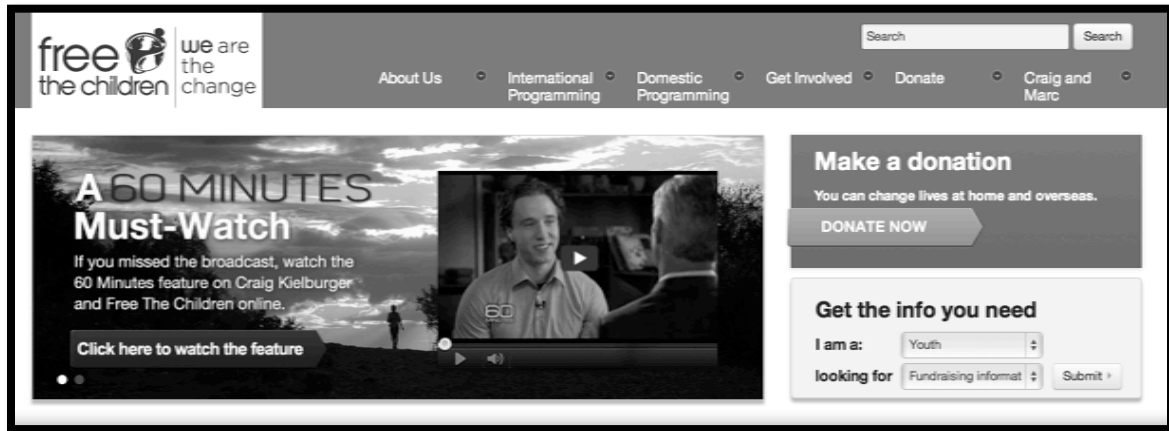


Figure 4.2 Free The Children Interview on 60 Minutes. From the Free The Children Website, January 2010 <http://www.freethechildren.com>.

After clicking on the link the viewer is taken to a new page where the interview can be watched in its entirety. The new page acts as a call to action, providing viewers with a number of opportunities to engage in fundraising activities, to donate, buy products that 'give back', and go on a volunteer trip, all of which were featured in the 60 Minutes interview. Each specific action highlighted on the webpage was coupled with an image and a link to a YouTube video explaining the impact of the activity. (see Figures 4.3, 4.4 & 4.5)

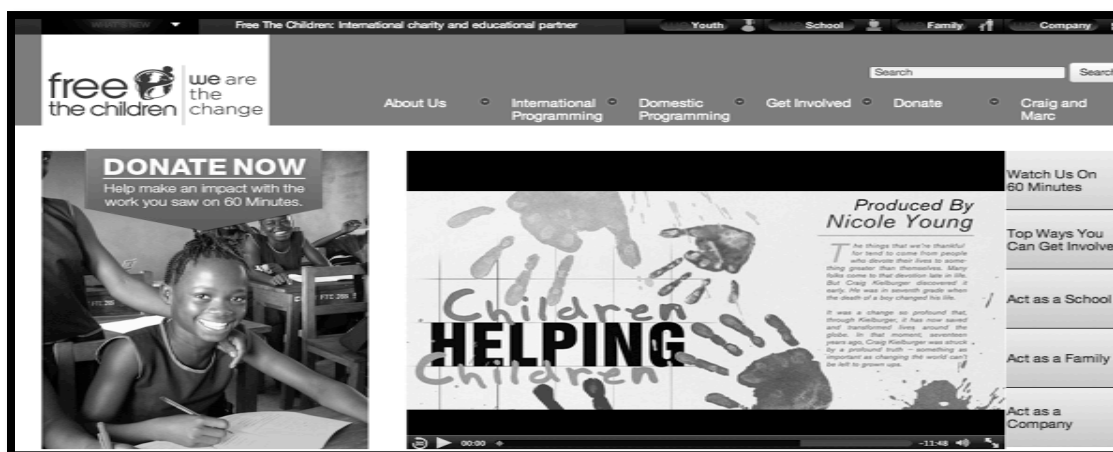


Figure 4.3 Children Helping Children. Adapted from the Free The Children Website, January, 2013. <http://www.freethechildren.com/60-minutes/>

In order to compel members to become active global citizens, FTC employs strategies to motivate young people to act. For example, as mentioned in Chapter Three, youth are encouraged to join an existing network of young people who are committed to ‘creating change’. As demonstrated in Figure 4.3 the organization suggests ways for viewers to become actively involved beyond simply watching the 60 Minutes interview.

Through the use of imagery, young members are reminded of their responsibility as ‘global citizens’ to help change or save the world. This is evident with the positioning of a photo (Figure 4.3) with young smiling schoolgirls under a link that says “DONATE NOW: Help make an impact with the work you saw on 60 Minutes”. Supporting this call to action is an adjacent image (Figure 4.3) of children’s handprints with the phrase ‘children helping children’. The use of primary colours, childlike handwriting and the word ‘helping’ capitalized and bolded creates feelings of familiarity and connectedness to children in need, capturing the attention of the young ‘global citizens’.

Applying Shultz’s (2007) typology of global citizenship to this example, FTC’s rhetoric positions participants as ‘transformational’ or ‘neoliberal’ global citizens. The sense of familiarity created through images of childlike handwriting invokes a shared humanity. While a transformational approach to global citizenship is grounded in the desire to reduce poverty and inequalities, this approach is based on a fictitious sense of connectedness between the giver and the receiver. FTC’s rhetoric of neoliberal global citizenship is also problematic. The presence of a “DONATE NOW” prompt allows participants to feel as though they are able to

contribute as an individual through a market choice to make a charitable donation. However, in the absence critical analysis of current global power imbalances, giving money or travelling to the global South to build schools or dig wells may be a shallow response, which will not meaningfully contribute to what are more complex problems (Urry, 2000). Such finite contributions, in the absence of any recognition of the contextual reasons for the need for aid will never contribute to more far reaching change.

Travel Overseas

As noted in Figure 4.4 below, a global citizen participating in FTC sponsored Volunteer Adventures has the opportunity to “see fascinating places, become immersed in new cultures, volunteer in local communities and develop lifelong friendships”. As Simpson (2004) notes, one of the reasons travel-based volunteer programs continue to be popular is the life-changing experiences youth have while abroad. A student who took part on a travel adventure trip was quoted as saying:

I spent 16 days in Kenya, and I can honestly say that those were the best two weeks of my life. . . . There’s something about the beautiful sunsets, exotic wildlife and the incredibly kind-hearted people that captivates you while you’re there and I felt like something I never knew was missing had been found. I think everyone needs to experience something like this trip at some point in their life!

Me To We/Volunteer Travel/Youth Trips/Kenya

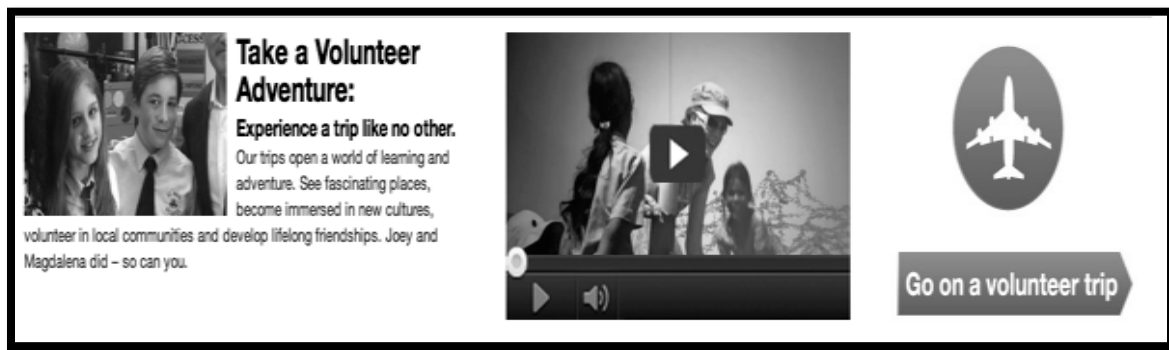


Figure 4.4 Take a Volunteer Adventure. From the Free The Children Website, January, 2013. <http://www.freethechildren.com/60-minutes/>

Roddick (2008) notes that ‘global citizens’ are often “privileged individuals who have the opportunity to learn about the world, often through travel” (p. 55). An aspect of the privilege associated with travel is that individuals participating on a FTC supported excursion pay thousands of dollars to take part in a travel adventure or volunteer trip. Me to We, the facilitators of the trip, even provide fundraising kits to help their participants raise the funds to offset personal cost (Me to We/Volunteer Trips/Youth Trips/Kenya).

According to Simpson (2004) short-term volunteer placements overseas largely benefit young people from the global North. FTC’s sister corporation Me to We acknowledges that young travelers will benefit greatly from volunteer travel. In contrast, very little information is provided regarding the benefits to local communities. On the ‘Youth Volunteer Trips’ section of Me to We’s website there are four interactive panels placed together to make a square. Inside of the square is a red circle that reads “What do you get on a Me to We Trip?”. The four panels are labeled ‘Building Leaders’, ‘Cultural Immersion’, ‘Community Interaction’ and ‘Meaningful Volunteerism’. Highlighted in each panel is a young person from the North in different settings. When each panel is clicked a message appears informing

the viewer what benefits are derived from taking part in volunteer travel. For example, the message on the 'Building Leaders' panel reads "Tangible leadership development equips participants with the tools they need to act on their newfound knowledge upon their return home" (Me to We/Volunteer Travel/Youth Trips). The 'Cultural Immersion' message states, "Through interaction with community members, participants get to know people who lead very different lives than themselves. Our trips broaden horizons and encourage understanding" (Me to We/Volunteer Travel/Youth Trips).

Referring back to Figure 4.4, the individual taking part in a Volunteer Adventure will have the opportunity to "see fascinating places [and] become immersed in new cultures". Canton and Santos (2009) liken this to "the relationship of colonial anthropologist to the people and cultures they studied: non-Westerners were to be learned *about*, not *with* or *from*" (p. 200). Travelling abroad for the purpose of immersing oneself in new cultures exoticizes the 'other' providing a superficial understanding of a group of people, reinforcing difference. Exposing themselves to new foods, music or cultures in a celebratory manner does little to help young people understand "the complexity of the historical relationships between lower-income countries and the West, examinations that are imperative if one is to understand the impact of such relationships and to challenge contemporary global inequalities" (Canton and Santos, 2009, p. 194). Consequently, understanding people from developing countries in such an essentialized manner "elide[s] the political, economic and cultural differences of the experiences of poverty in various locals" (Jefferess, 2002, p. 13). While FTC's website does not go

into detail about such trips, these seemingly innocent actions construct stereotypical images and reinforce a binary relationship between the developed world and those who are positioned as under-developed. This focus is consistent with the neoliberal ideal of global citizenship as detailed by Shultz (2007), which identifies the ability to travel and move beyond national boundaries. A central component of this form of citizenship is “based on a fundamental understanding that as individuals we should be able to move throughout the world freely, enjoying the rewards regardless of national or other boundaries” (p. 252).

Global Citizens and Awareness of the ‘Others’

Connections between Individuals in the Global North and the Global South

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, FTC’s website has links to many YouTube videos highlighting the various projects the organization supports and promotes including We Day events. These videos are found on FTC’s YouTube channel *freethechildrenintl* where FTC has uploaded over 300 videos. The video described below is just under six minutes and features Nelly Furtado, an internationally recognized Canadian singer, songwriter and an ambassador for the organization, speaking at a We Day event.

Nelly walks out onto a stage greeting an enthusiastic crowd of young people. She shares the stage with the Kenyan Boys Choir with whom she has just performed. She begins by telling the audience how excited she is to be part of We Day. Next she transitions into telling them about a ‘life changing’ trip she took to East Africa earlier in the year. She mentions spending time with girls like Susan, who was shown

earlier in a video, and how much she admires their qualities of strength, determination and bravery. Next Nelly tells the crowd how proud she is of all of them and how proud she is to be at We Day. She follows this statement by congratulating them on their fundraising actions that include car washes, bake sales, and donating birthday money. She notes how these actions allow the audience members to take a stand to create real change and how they as individuals are able to leave their mark on the world. The crowd cheers. She tells them that she wants to join FTC and asks if it is okay. The crowd erupts in applause and cheering and she thanks them. Nelly tells the crowd that she wants to be an ambassador for FTC and acknowledges that while she is “not a student today” like those in attendance, she feels like one, a student of life. Next the pop star tells the crowd that she wants to share something with them. She informs them, “I am making a very special announcement today. I am donating one million dollars to FTC”. Again the crowd erupts, this time giving her a standing ovation.

Nelly goes on to tell the crowd, “I am donating the money to help FTC empower girls in Africa. I am giving this gift because I was inspired by the children I met in Kenya, and so inspired by all of you. I want to encourage you to keep doing your work”. Nelly explains that the donation is part of a matching program. For every dollar donated by FTC members, Nelly will donate one dollar. She tells the crowd of cheering young people that together, “We are going to build a new girls’ boarding school this time in Massai Land where there isn’t a school like it, so girls like Susan, like I met can have an education like all of you have in Canada”.

Appearing emotional, Nelly tells the audience that, “I left a part of my heart in Kenya

and I can't wait to go back. My heart is full of inspiration because of all of you. So thank you for being here today for me to share my message with you".

As she is about to leave the stage after thanking the cheering crowd, Craig and Marc Kielburger rush to meet her on the stage. With music playing in the background Craig tells Nelly that it is impossible to properly thank her for her contributions and the impact that her efforts will have on the girls in Kenya. Craig states, "The only way we could think of to express our gratitude was to bring a very special friend to you". Looking bewildered Nelly listens as Marc says, "She has travelled all the way from Kenya to be with you here today to say thank you!"

The crowd begins to rumble with excitement as Marc reminds the audience that they saw this special friend in an earlier video. With the crowd erupting, Susan, a young girl from Kenya whom Nelly met on her 'life changing' travels, is brought up on stage by Craig. Nelly and Susan embrace while the crowd looks on standing and cheering. The first thing Nelly says to the audience is, "She is wearing her new [school] uniform" (see Figure 4.5). Susan addresses Nelly and tells her how much she and her fellow classmates miss and love her. Susan continues by stating that many girls in Kenya and Africa do not go to school but her gift of one million dollars and the construction of an all girls' school will change that.



Figure 4.5 Nelly Furtado Speaks On Stage at We Day. From <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyyWTNnzsYI&list=UUm6agaIkn5aBjILLds7P1HQ&index=34>. Retrieved January 2013.

The words spoken by Nelly Furtado and the actions of FTC, while seemingly well intentioned, are troubling on several fronts, and such actions linked to creating a ‘global citizen’ identity require a closer analysis. To begin, the singer’s recollection of her ‘life changing’ trip to Kenya and declaration that a part of her ‘heart was left in Kenya and she can’t wait to go back’ need to be contextualized. These statements express the privilege of a global citizen identity that is achieved through the ability to move freely across borders. Andreotti (2006) notes, “having the choice to traverse from the local to the global space is the determining factor for whether or not you can be a global citizen”(p. 43). Such opportunities and luxuries are often not available to those living in the global South, as individuals often do not have access

to the resources required to engage in the same levels of mobility.⁷ Secondly, Nelly linked fundraising efforts, such as car washes, bake sales and small donations, with young people's ability to leave 'their mark on the world'. The ability of the global citizen to leave one's mark on the world is an action that Andreotti (2006) calls, "a one way transfusion" (p. 43), where an individual's impact is seen as moving in only in one direction, North to South.

FTC followers are regularly reminded that they are the change that the world is waiting for and it is up to them to lift people out of poverty. One way for this to happen is through education. One of the most common activities for youth travelling abroad with the organization is building schools in selected communities. This is a sure way for young people to leave their mark on the world. In dominant understandings of development, education is viewed as a universal equalizer, a way of removing barriers that lead to an impoverished existence. Northern patterns of schooling are considered complementary to economic growth and development. This construction of poverty as being primarily caused by a lack of education underlies many development efforts. By promoting Northern influenced education, the 'global citizen' once again engages in actions that move in a singular direction, from the North to the South, hence imposing the Northern knowledge system onto others. Further, by using education as a tool to transmit particular worldviews, Zemach-Bersin (2007) argues, education serves to assimilate students into a shared understanding defined by those in power. Nelly exemplifies this notion when she

⁷ Resources may include financial resources, proper documentation, nation-state approval via immigration, or infrastructure that allows for effortless cross boarder movement.

tells the audience at We Day that she wants the girls she met in Kenya to “have an education like all of you have in Canada”. Dobson (2006) argues that a relationship between the giver and the receiver built on such a moral basis, contributes to unequal and paternalistic relations, contributing to the vulnerability of the recipient. The paternalistic relationship that Dobson mentions is highlighted when Nelly proclaims her excitement to the audience that Susan is wearing her new school uniform.

FTC’s deployment of the rhetoric of schooling is significant for a number of reasons. First, providing the opportunity of formal education to individuals in the global South leaves members of the organization feeling positive about their contributions. As mentioned in Chapter Three, individuals are motivated to offer assistance to those who most closely resemble themselves. Further, the construction of a building provides tangible evidence of the impact of their donations. Second, engaging in the rhetoric of schooling reinforces to members of FTC that education is an important and positive experience in their own lives. This point is strengthened by the partnerships that FTC has forged with educators, school boards and institutions of higher learning across Canada. For example, to be able to attend We Day and hear messages like the one delivered by Nelly Furtado, you must first be involved in a FTC school based program.

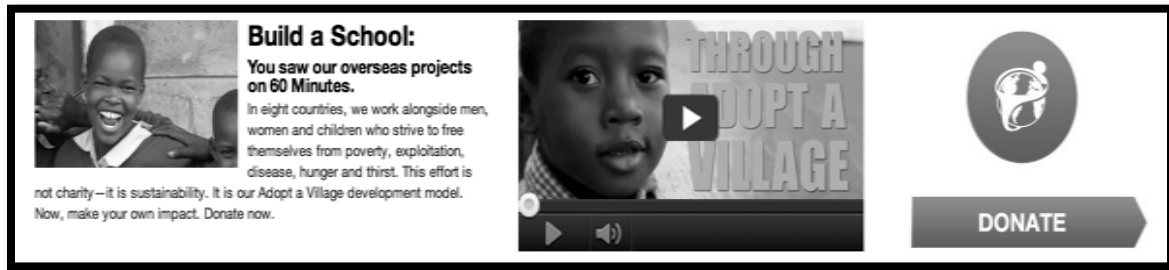


Figure 4.6 Build a School. From the Free The Children Website, January, 2013.
<http://www.freethechildren.com/60-minutes/>

Perhaps most troubling is the way the surprise visit by Susan was used to visually demonstrate the positive impact of young peoples' helping efforts and encourage participants to feel good about their efforts. FTC includes individual or small group recipients of its aid strategically at We Day events, often using them to display how they have personally benefitted from the philanthropy. Further, their presence is used to convey the gratitude of all those who have benefitted from the aid provided by the organization. As Jefferess (2012) states, FTC's use of celebrity testimonials in support of its overseas work in Kenya is "not geared towards notions of redress or justice for the ongoing violence being perpetrated against the Maasai but how the North American visitor finds fulfillment by loving the suffering people of Kenya" (p. 23).

This strategy hooks participants emotionally. Flown in from around the world, children such as the Kenyan Boys Choir or students of recently constructed schools entertain or share their personal stories for young people attending We Day events. Such displays function as a powerful message of the 'good work' being done, while putting a sympathetic and human face on the issue. White & Choudhury (2007) note that it is not uncommon for NGOs to use children in a consultation or

advocacy capacity, flying them “to international conferences or visiting the home country of the donor agency that sponsors their organization” (p. 537). While FTC appears as a caring and supportive patron, this form of empowerment comes with a price. The few children that are chosen to be the human face and voice to global inequality are progressively dissociated from the group of people for whom they speak (White & Choudhury, 2007). Often these children are used for optics only, contributing no critical reflection of the situation they face in their home country. Exposure to events such as We Day, whether in person or watched through promotional videos, reinforces stereotypical notions of under-developed groups of Southern people by highlighting their inability to overcome inequities without the assistance of outsiders. It could be argued that Susan herself is a global citizen because of her ability to travel beyond her own national borders. However, Susan’s ability to act globally is only made possible by the apparent intervention of FTC. Becoming a global citizen depends on whether or not an individual has the “choice to traverse from the local to the global space” (Andreotti, 2006, p. 43) and who is in a position to project “their local (assumptions and desires) as everyone else’s global” (Dobson, 2005, p.264). Thus, FTC is in a privileged position to extend its generosity and help, while Susan is positioned to be dependent on the organization’s help.

How connections lead to feelings of responsibility

The term ‘global citizen’ is often associated with a sense of loyalty and concern for people affected by poverty, displacement and oppression (Schattle, 2005; Shultz and Jorgenson, 2008; Nodding, 2005). Nodding (2005) equates global

citizenship with concern noting, “when we are concerned with the welfare of X –our nation, region or globe – we are concerned with the well-being of all its inhabitants” (p. 3). In support of this view, Schattle (2005) states that awareness of issues leads to a greater sense of responsibility, motivating individuals to project their voice as global citizens while engaged in activities occurring domestically, internationally and cross-culturally.

Young participants in FTC play an important part in the organization as global citizens, as defined by their global concern, and they are asked to assume the responsibility associated with such a role. Throughout the organization’s promotional material, youth are reminded that they are the generation that can change the world through their actions. Statements telling young people that they “can truly end the worst forms of poverty” (WeDay/ donate/gifts) and “show[ing] support for your global family [will show] how friendship can change the world” (ibid) indicate that making substantive and sustainable global changes that will address issues of global poverty, oppression and social injustice depends on their actions, as young members of FTC.

Kennelly (2011) notes that feelings of responsibility often give way to guilt, overwhelming young people and creating a sense of duty and moral obligation to fix the world’s problems. Although acknowledging the zeal that young people from the North bring to helping those in need and as defenders of human rights, Mutua (2002) also problematizes such endeavors. Specifically, Mutua cautions that young people are unaware that their impulse to help “is steeped in Western and European history” (p. 22). Without any substantive knowledge of other cultures, young people

enter into these 'helping' relationships, potentially believing that their worldview is the only one that truly matters. Hence, their mission becomes to 'help' impoverished 'others' to emulate Northerner ways.

Additionally, rhetoric of responsibility and global citizenship in relation to the actions undertaken by youth can avoid calling attention to the North's complicity in perpetuating systems of dominance that ultimately create an imbalance of power between the North and the South. Throughout FTC's promotional material, the repetitive references to poverty and the role of the global citizen in eradicating poverty are troubling. People are defined as poor or lacking based on poverty's symptoms, while no explanation is provided of the cause of poverty or the context in which poverty happens. FTC's lack of attention to the systemic causes of global economic imbalance excuses young people from having to critically reflect on their own privileged position. The result is that global citizens, in this case FTC members, are only able to address issues of global poverty from 'outside'. Hence, poverty is a problem that exists 'out there' to 'other people', reinforcing the binary of 'us' and 'them', and North and South.

Global Citizens, Youth and Privilege

It is extremely encouraging that FTC recognizes young people as potential global citizens and is working to establish means by which they can participate in the public sphere. However, while youth are bestowed with the designation of 'global citizen', to be a global citizen in the radical or transformational sense of Shultz (2007) would require them to be equipped with a stronger analysis of global

injustice than FTC appears to provide. To truly reflect a radical or transformational approach, participants would need to demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the broader political, economic, social and cultural contexts. When asked “What is the We Act Program?”, FTC provides the following answer:

Free The Children’s We Act program inspires a generation to care about the issues that affect our communities and our world, and provides the practical tools needed to turn that inspiration into action. We Act puts students at the forefront of active citizenship by educating them on social issues and action planning, developing leadership skills and engaging them in world-changing action.

We Day/What Is We Day/FAQs

Although FTC encourages active citizenship and world changing action through education on social issues, the organization’s rhetoric requires closer examination. Based on Shultz’s (2007) conceptualization of global citizenship, FTC’s approach reflects a neoliberal understanding. For example, FTC’s statement that it “provides the practical tools needed to turn that inspiration into action” is largely grounded in consumer based choices. As previously mentioned, such actions manifest in the purchase of Me to We products, fundraising campaigns and volunteer adventure tours. Additionally, the privileged identity of global citizen is reinforced by young people’s ability to gain specific skills such as leadership and communication, as well as increased confidence, which helps them to demonstrate cultural capital in university and college applications and job interviews.

FTC’s operationalization of education on social issues and engagement on world changing actions appear to be similarly neoliberal in its approach. The emphasis of the organization’s online promotional material appears to be on raising

awareness of global inequities. Participants are primarily educated about the fact that poverty exists but the structural reasons for the persistence of economic inequities are never interrogated. FTC's approach to world-changing actions is consistent with this neoliberal understanding of social issues, consisting primarily of working within existing structures. As Shultz (2007) notes, the radical and transformative approaches would deem such actions limited, as they do nothing to challenge broader structures that serve to perpetuate entrenched systemic global inequities.

It is widely acknowledged that the majority of the world's population is subject to the political and economic forces that originate in Northern cities and boardrooms (Karlberg, 2008). Scholars have argued that global citizenship is a concept used to denote citizens from a globalized Northern world. Historically, Eurocentric privilege has enabled Northern individuals to universalize their own experiences and identities, projecting them as universal norms (Bowden, 2003; Karlberg, 2008). Hence, it is imperative that we are critical of how Northern youth are portrayed as global citizens and how this can be steeped in imperialism, perpetuating power and privilege over the global South.

FTC's contention that it promotes global citizenship is puzzling, given the lack of evidence from the website of a strong focus on fostering critical awareness of global social justice issues among its participants. Rather than helping young people develop the skills to contextualize injustice, the organization's primary activities tend to focus on less ambitious projects intended to promote good feelings among the global helpers. Throughout its promotional materials, there is little evidence that

participants are challenged to consider their positioning in the more affluent North. As, Jefferess (2012) argues, it is important to question the extent to which global citizenship pedagogy continues to enshrine “colonial frameworks of identity and difference, as well as neoliberal social and economic ideology” (p. 19). Instead, FTC positions youth as benevolent global citizens. Implicit in these messages is the positioning of Northerners as ‘saviours’ of the impoverished people of the South. Consequently, FTC participants are rarely confronted with uncomfortable questions of their own complicity.

CHAPTER FIVE: HELPING

Rhetoric of Help

Our world is complex, and truly effective solutions require a holistic approach. Free The Children is high-impact, accountable, and innovative. Free The Children is an international charity and educational partner. Our organization is unique among Canadian charities in that it operates programs both domestically and internationally, in a manner that is intended to be interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Our overarching mandate is to help children and youth fulfill their potential to be agents of change.

Free The Children/About Us/Our Model

FTC has effectively branded itself as the organization of children helping children and has successfully attracted a loyal and dedicated following. Campaigns targeted at young people are not unique to FTC but it has developed an exceptionally savvy marketing campaign that has been able to secure a broad base of support, not only among youth but also adults, as evidenced by the organization's acceptance by many school systems.

Competition among charitable organizations to attract attention is intense. Organizations recognize that, "It is not enough [for donors] to merely feel good about their donation. They need to be offered an incentive to give to one organization versus the immeasurable others competing for funding" (Wishart, 2008, p. 28). FTC is acutely aware of the need to distinguish itself and has therefore developed various innovative strategies to capture the attention and engage the emotions of young people. This chapter will investigate FTC's rhetoric related to helping and the extent to which this consists of small, feel-good consumerist activities. In addition this chapter will investigate FTC's rhetoric associated with

helping in its promotional materials. Terms such as empowerment, educating, and giving are prominent and used to encourage young people to engage in the organization's altruistic efforts. In this chapter, I will return to the concept of empowerment and other ideas associated with giving in order to explore the extent to which such concepts serve to promote a feel-good approach to helping and preclude the development of a critical analysis of global injustice.

Consumerism and Helping

Linking fundraising efforts to the purchase of goods has become an increasingly common practice among charities. As noted in Chapter Two (see Figure 4.1) FTC regularly promotes helping or giving through the purchase of a product or a service. The message is conveyed to youth that through their purchasing power, they may contribute to organizational efforts to make positive changes in the world. For example, a popular campaign for the organization has been the purchase of the Water Rafiki Friend Chain in exchange for providing clean water for a year for one person (see Figure 5.1).



Figure 5.1 Water Rafiki Friend Chain. From the Free The Children Website, February, 2013. <http://www.freethechildren.com/water>

When the “Get yours now!” link is clicked, the shopper is taken to FTC’s sister organization Me To Me. There the consumer learns that the purchase of a ten-dollar necklace not only provides clean water to one person for a year but also employs a Maasai mamma, helping her achieve financial independence. Shoppers help by, “ridding [individuals of the global South] of waterborne illnesses and freeing [children] to attend school” (Me To We/Products/Water Rafiki Friend Chain). Although individual level responses address specific issues as they arise (and reach the attention of those in the North), such responses may inadvertently preclude the development of more systemic solutions. Thus, rather than challenging governments, issues such as poverty, lack of clean drinking water, and inadequate education are left to be addressed by the benevolence of young people.

Kennelly (2011) notes how linking the positive feelings associated with ‘helping’ to consumerism as a form of activism can be problematic. For instance, she uses an example of a speech given by FTC’s Craig Kielburger in which he encouraged young people to donate money to the organization’s charitable causes through the purchase of merchandise as a positive and accessible strategy to eliminate poverty (p. 50). FTC has positioned itself to be able to capitalize on participants’ enthusiasm, commitment to social justice issues and consumer lifestyles. By promoting activities such as making feel-good purchases or fundraising, youth are encouraged simply to get involved and feel as though they are making positive contributions. The purchase of products and services provides us with enjoyment and peace of mind that our consumerism is helping to address issues of global injustice. In reality, such practices result in a disconnection between our actions and the reasons for the need

for charity. As Wirgau et al (2010) explain “The result is the depoliticization of the root causes of social problems that philanthropy is asked to confront and the marginalization of those in need” (p. 613). By linking benevolence to consumption, consumer/benefactors are disengaged from the objectives of the organization’s efforts, as well as those being helped. Hence, young people’s energy gets directed towards fundraising and making specific purchases, rather than developing strategies to work toward sustainable structural change.

This approach to helping is consistent with neoliberal ideology, which eschews structural approaches to addressing change, instead promoting individualistic strategies. A neo-liberal approach promotes the belief in the importance of the marketplace at the expense of notions of common good. Hence, rather than advocating state interventions to eliminate poverty or address social ills, poverty is conceptualized as the responsibility of the private sector and charitable organizations.

This individualistic approach may also be evident in the reasons why young people may choose to participate in FTC. Beyond altruism, participants may be further motivated by the direct benefit that youth can receive by being active in the organization. In research conducted on the experience of young people in volunteer abroad and voluntourism programs, Roberts (2004) and Roddick (2008) noted that individuals felt their efforts helped them develop self confidence and skills related to leadership, communication and resourcefulness that they felt would be transferable to their future careers. FTC capitalizes on its skills development approach to attract Northern youth to participate in its programming. FTC’s focus

on building entrepreneurial fundraising skills among participants may ultimately translate into a valued skill set as they enter the workforce. This allows young people to market themselves in a competitive neoliberal social order. Consequently, FTC's approach is consistent with neoliberal thinking, which reinforces the belief that markets are the best mechanism to solve social problems. In other words, the organization promotes youth involvement as a means for developing individualized skills that may be used to build one's future career.

The organization's emphasis on the link between helping others and self-improvement and/or the development of leadership skills or simply having fun is problematic. At the bottom of the Figure 5.3 there is a link called "Learn More". As this image is located in "The Impact of Adopt a Village" section of the website one would assume that they would be learning more about the Adopt a Village program in Sierra Leone. Instead the viewer is taken to a new page titled "Results and Impacts" with a picture of a group of exuberant young people clearly from the global North huddled together cheering, waving their arms in the air and giving a thumbs up (Figure 5.2). Below is a caption that reads,

Research shows that our programs have a lasting impact. Today, our story is made up of your stories – those that continue to shape Free The Children's growth and impact, while empowering a generation of young people to achieve their fullest potential. Our domestic and international programming work together to achieve this.

Free The Children/ About Us/Our Mission and Our Model

This message, accompanied by an image of a group of jubilant young people who appear to be volunteers from the North, leads the viewer to question exactly whose voices are making up the stories of the organization. The focus seems to be on the

helpers, rather than those being helped. Again, this is an example of how neoliberal thinking pervades FTC, leading to a focus on how participating may contribute to one's personal growth and future success. In this conceptualization, the voices and experiences of children in the South become silenced as the focus shifts to the benefits experienced by those in the North.



Figure 5.2 Results and Impacts. From the Free The Children website, February, 2013.
<http://www.freethechildren.com/about-us/our-model/results-and-impacts/>

Such an emphasis of self-improvement and development of skills does little to address the entrenched privilege enjoyed by the good Samaritans from the North. Andreotti (2006) further questions how this approach allows for a deeper understanding of the “economic and cultural roots of the inequalities in power and wealth/labour distribution in a complex and uncertain system” (p. 41). This lends further credence to the assertion that FTC’s neoliberal thinking accords primacy to individual responses to collective issues. Another corollary of such thinking is that it renders structural issues largely invisible, thereby undermining perceived need for cultivating a critical analysis. In other words, rather than encouraging young

people to consider the causes underlying poverty and other sources of global inequities, they are simply encouraged to focus on the ways that they, as individuals, may contribute to positive change. Such approaches can serve to avoid challenges to the status quo.

Helping and Celebrities

Another strategy used by the organization to capture the attention of youth involves collaborating with celebrities, who are integral to We Day celebrations and who are also included in promotional materials. By forging relationships with high profile and easily recognizable public figures, FTC capitalizes on their appeal to youth, thereby ensuring that young people seek admission to their events. The appeal and power of celebrities to bring attention to a cause and motivate donors is apparent in the reaction of the crowd in response to Nelly Furtado's announcement (see Chapter Four) of pledging her own money to match the donations to an FTC campaign. Further, the prominence of movie and music stars at We Day Events results in pop culture extravaganza, ensuring that the organization appears cutting edge and relevant to youth culture.

While the use of prominent celebrities is undoubtedly an effective means for capturing the attention of youth, there are both negative and positive consequences to such an approach. As Wishart (2008) notes, the danger of using star power to promote a cause is that often, "the glamour of an attractive campaign overshadows or mistranslates the issue" (p. 27), as the celebrities often become the focus of the story. Further, a heavy reliance on celebrities often results in the voices of privileged

Northerners becoming the most prominent. Paradoxically, in an attempt to capture the attention of the youth in the North, the voices and perspectives of those in the South are further marginalized and further silenced.

It must be acknowledged, however, that not all agree that the reliance on the use of celebrity, branding and pop culture as a means of engaging young people in altruistic practices is negative. MacLachlan, Carr & McAuliffe, (2010) argue that many celebrities and corporations have positively influenced development policy in institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank. By virtue of their status as public figures, celebrities may be able to “[draw] people’s attention to an issue for which they would otherwise all too easily avert their gaze” (MacLachlan, Carr & McAuliffe, 2010, p. 39). From this perspective, prominent figures may represent an opportunity to not only promote the membership goals of the organization but also exert influence at various levels.

Alternately, others counter that an organization’s charitable objectives are seriously compromised when benevolence is attached to celebrity endorsements (Jefferess, 2002; Wirgau et al., 2010). When celebrities are used to capture our attention, there is a risk that the seriousness of global inequities is obscured, as I previously mentioned with reference to Wishart (2008). Consequently, although celebrities may serve as a significant source of motivation for young people to consider participating in the organization, a heavy reliance on such an approach is not unproblematic. Benevolence delivered via a consumer model also serves to keep youth at a safe distance from harsh realities, able to avoid an indepth consideration of economic and power imbalances between the global North and South.

Promoting Good Feelings

As I have shown, FTC uses multiple strategies to engage youth in the activities of the organization. In addition to motivating young people through a consumption-based model of giving and the reliance on celebrity endorsements, youth are enticed to help through a perceived connection between themselves and those they help. This is achieved through the careful selection of images and scripted encounters. As suggested in Chapters Three and Four, young members of FTC are presented with a sense of connection through the use of images in promotional material and real life emotionally charged encounters at events such as We Day.

Figure 5.3 is an example of one of the many images FTC uses to demonstrate the impact that domestic efforts can have on individuals in recipient countries. This particular image, used more than once on the organization's website, shows a group of young girls in a classroom, arms around one another, looking directly into the camera smiling and appearing happy. Viewers are reminded of the level of help that they can provide through their domestic efforts in the caption written below the images, "650 + Schools and School rooms built". Beside the photo is a caption that explains how the Adopt a Village program is impacting those in Sierra Leone. The caption reads, "With over 35 new classrooms built and rehabilitated in this war torn district, children are now [excelling] in their pursuit of primary education" (Free The Children).

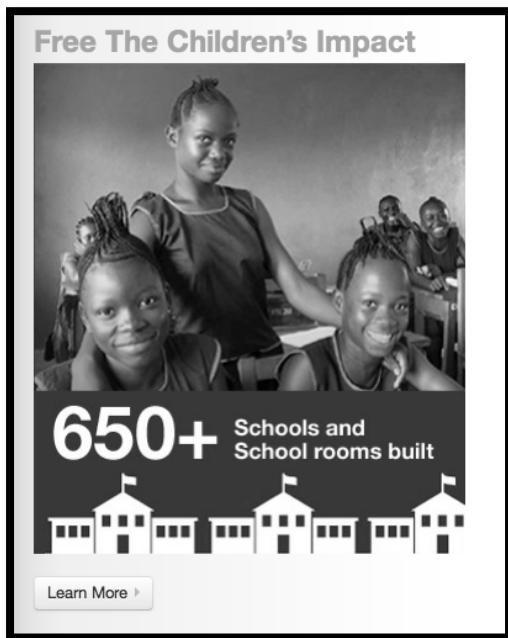


Figure 5.3 Free The Children's Impact. From the Free The Children website, February, 2013. <http://www.freethechildren.com>

FTC often uses pictures of happy, smiling children wearing school uniforms to demonstrate the benefits of donor dollars. Batty (1999) interprets the use of such images as “symboliz[ing] for the West the very possibility that, with the right guidance and assistance, the developing world will come more closely to resemble the world... that has reached out to assist it” (p. 24). These images create an oversimplification of the broader structural issues that cause ongoing global inequities and dependence, and may gloss over the challenges faced by individuals in the South. Similarly, the organization relies on what Wishart (2008) calls a tactic of familiarity. People are more likely to donate funds or commit time to a cause that helps people with whom they can relate. In the case of Figure 5.3 the young girls appear to be happy to be in school, an idealized concept to which their peers in the North can relate.

Images such as these are often intended to encourage ‘helping’ efforts but also position individuals of the global South as helpless and unable to care for themselves. Further, it is assumed that striving to approximate Northern norms will necessarily improve the lives of children in the South. As mentioned in Chapter Three, images of innocent, vulnerable children are a powerful strategy to establish a sense of connectedness with young viewers. Establishing this emotional connection is one way of fostering a motivation to help. By not providing adequate background on the systemic causes of inequities, reliance on such emotional hooks obscures the complexity of challenges faced by people in the global South, thus limiting the likelihood of young people engaging in different forms of advocacy beyond solely fundraising. By presenting young people with seemingly straightforward solutions about how poverty can be eradicated, FTC does not encourage further consideration of the complexities of global injustice on its website. Following this logic, FTC may actually contribute to silencing the conversation related to how global justice may be furthered. This contradicts FTC’s oft repeated claim that it works to empower its participants and the recipients of its aid.

Helping and Empowerment

FTC’s rights-based approach to development focuses on empowering people, specifically children, who have been marginalized and pushed to the fringes of society. People living in poverty are often outside the “flows of power and therefore lack power in advancing their human rights” (MacLachlan, Carr and McAuliffe, 2010, p. 22). Positioning itself as defenders of rights, FTC employs the language of

‘empowerment’ to measure the success of development projects. The level of empowerment, in its view, demonstrates the extent to which its interventions have increased liberation and opportunity among recipients. However, Kelsall and Mercer (2003) argue that the concept of ‘empowerment’ is problematic, as it often reflects a form of power that is bestowed upon the recipients of development aid from outside forces. Thus, contrary to popular perception, empowerment does not reflect independent power enjoyed by the recipients of power.

Depending on how empowerment is conceptualized, it may be argued that the recipients of aid must be key decision-makers in processes set up to help them. In other words, rather than determining what is ‘best’ for those in the South, true empowerment would consist of Northern helpers assisting the recipients develop and implement strategies they have devised themselves. It is unclear from looking at FTC’s website whether they engage in such a process.

It is also necessary to note that ‘empowerment’ can have a negative effect on a community. Kelsall and Mercer (2003) note that Northern helpers often assume Southern communities are homogenous, ignoring the fact that they are comprised of diverse groups and individuals. FTC’s mission is to free children from poverty, exploitation and the idea that they are powerless (Free The Children/ About Us/ Mission/Our Model). As mentioned above, FTC achieves this through the Adopt-a-Village program, which places a focus on eliminating the barriers that cause poverty for children and their families. The organization’s reliance on images of young recipients positions the Southern child as the one that will help end poverty for his/her family. As Canton and Santos (2009) mention, children are ‘safe’ targets of

development assistance, as they commonly do not have the authority or skills required to raise discussions that challenge cultural misunderstandings or global power imbalances. By ignoring the significance of household, age, kinships, gender, ability, ethnicity, race and nation, the act of 'empowering' groups can actually 'dis-empower' them by reinforcing past and existing power structures. FTC's rhetoric would suggest that the only way recipients of the organization's aid can truly achieve their empowered destiny, is to be transformed from the outside via Northern intervention. As Kelsall and Mercer (2003) note, such a transformation facilitated by outside forces risks destroying the recipients way-of-being in the world as individuals, family members or part of a larger community group.

The ways in which children are depicted in FTC materials merit further attention. Children are often portrayed in the company of adults from the North but rarely alongside adults from the South. By obscuring the adults in Southern children's lives, viewers are more readily able to imagine the similarities between themselves and the Southern children being depicted. Such depictions of de-contextualized children serve various purposes. They provide the organization with a sympathetic focus, likely to appeal to potential participants because children who are in need of aid are easy for participants to identify with on the basis of age and to see as innocent sufferers. The omission of adults from the South in the promotional materials allows the viewer to avoid asking uncomfortable questions, such as why they are not able to meet the needs of these young people. These images are also useful in reinforcing simplistic understandings of poverty, leaving the impression that poverty can be eradicated through fundraising as the viewer may infer that

simply providing the funds to build a school, develop a well or other such specific initiatives will radically improve the child's life. By not providing an explanation of the broader impacts of poverty, the viewer is able to discount the broader challenges faced by the entire family and community.



Figure 5.4 Change your Life, Change the World. From http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCfYEucBXxl&feature=player_embedded. Retrieved February, 2013

Typically when Southern adults are included in photos on the FTC website they are demonstrating how new initiatives are positively impacting their lives or, as seen in Figure 5.4, thanking and celebrating young Northern helpers who have worked in their communities.

In some situations young 'helpers' are thus positioned to deliver help in ways that would traditionally be the responsibility of the parent, elders or other adult community members, such as economic security, procurement of food, shelter, etc. Batty (1999) argues that the use of images where adults are visibly absent compels Northern donors to "assume the role of in locus parentis, once again placing

ourselves, however compassionate our motives, in a paternalistic relationship with the [South] that, in effect displaces biological parents” (p. 26). By empowering Northern youth to impart their help onto communities, which they often know very little or nothing about, FTC participants are engaging in paternalistic behaviours vis-a-vis initiatives such as the Adopt a Village program. Young people are encouraged to view themselves as sufficiently knowledgeable to contribute to charity without the input of resident adults. The exclusive focus on children enables those in the North to feel like experts about the situation of those in the South. These images also perpetuate the belief that the personal inadequacies of adults prevent them from caring for their children, thereby reinforcing Northern beliefs about the need for a saviour.

A video titled “Craig Kielburger Kenya Water Surprise!” further illustrates this pervasive absence of Southern adults in FTC promotional materials. This video features Craig standing in front of a drilling machine located in a rural area of Kenya. He is excited and is joined by the local community, although they are not shown, as a drill is about to strike water. Looking into the camera Craig states, “So many communities, like this one, have benefitted from Free The Children’s water catchment programs and well programs thanks to your support”. As water shoots up into the air, soaking Craig, he shouts to the camera, “Thank you for your amazing support of Free The Children!” This video, as well as others featured throughout the organization’s website, demonstrate how a single dominant voice is heard. This focus on Craig, a familiar Northern personality and the complete absence of any locals is curious. Did locals not participate in the project? Did they not want the

well? By not including them in the promotional material they are rendered not only invisible, but powerless. We may conjecture that their absence is intended to obscure any depictions that may not be appealing to a dominant audience, such as the unpleasantness of poverty. Once again, the imagery being used is likely intended to foster a sense of connection between Northern young helpers and the children of the South. Further, by focusing on the benefits associated with helping, the current realities that may arouse discomfort in viewers may be avoided.

Help or intervention, therefore, becomes the responsibility of altruistic Northerners, creating what Andreotti (2006) refers to as a “new ‘civilizing mission’ as the slogan for a generation who take up the ‘burden’ of saving/educating/civilizing the world” (p. 41). The result is that NGOs in the North have come to envision themselves as ‘saviours’ of those in the South. As Pogge (2002) stresses:

We are familiar, through charity appeals, with the assertion that it lies in our hands to save the lives of many or, by doing nothing, to let these people die. We are less familiar with the assertion examined here of a weightier responsibility: that most of us not merely let people starve but also participate in starving them. (Cited in Dobson, 2006, p. 182)

Although Pogge’s contention that we are directly involved in letting people starve is harsh, it does highlight our global interconnectedness, reinforcing the fact that a position of innocence by Northerners is an illusion. Whether we choose to engage in charity work or not, we are all implicated in global relations and participate in systems which sustain and, or challenge inequities. As noted in Chapter Four, even our consumer choices are implicated in global economics. Rather than promoting a consideration of our complicity, FTC positions young people as potential saviours of

those in the South, thereby perpetuating its feel-good approach and contradicting its rhetoric of empowerment.

Northern Saviours and the Perpetuation of Imperialism

The image of ‘helper’ or ‘saviour’ has elevated NGOs and their participants to a “hallowed, if not sacred, plane as the consciousness of society” (Mutua, 2006, p. 33). Although it is difficult to criticize the work done by such seemingly benevolent organizations, it is important to interrogate the extent to which organizations such as FTC are implicated in processes that sustain imperial relations. By engaging in rhetoric that does not challenge the status quo and reifies specific forms of helping, both the organization and its participants are able to act comfortably in the knowledge that they are behaving as ‘good citizens’. As Choules (2007) states, these discourses of helping are problematic:

Those in the privileged position retain the power and ability to determine who is accorded ‘help’ and when. As a result, notions of the ‘deserving’ needy and ‘undeserving’ needy arise, determined by those who are furthest from the reality of those with the need. (2007, p. 467)

This rhetoric positions the helper as the protector, while conceptualizing the recipient of help as an object that requires protection. This dynamic reinforces an often patronizing and paternalistic relationship reminiscent of past imperial relations. Charitable acts are “not necessarily an absolute ‘good’; it may be a means of ‘helping’ but it does little to transform the situation which produces the [recipient’s] suffering” (Jefferess, 2008, p. 34).

By virtue of their position in the North, helpers are expected to know what Southern peoples need better than they themselves know. As Canton and Santos

(2009) explain, imperial discourse is so entrenched in everyday events that it often penetrates organizations “that exist to promote complex thinking, stereotype reduction, global awareness, and good citizenship ethic” (p. 201).

FTC’s rhetoric of ‘help’ serves to entrench Northerners’ position of ‘helper’ or ‘saviour’ while compelling youth to engage in ‘feel-good’ actions thereby reinforcing existing bases of power, privilege and domination. In other words, simply adhering to unquestioned norms, assumptions and practices, the organization and its young participants may be complicit in perpetuating colonial relations. Conspicuously absent from FTC’s online promotional material is analysis or discussion of why these global inequities exist. The organization assumes a ‘helper or ‘saviour’ role when it participates in disseminating images of seemingly disempowered or recently empowered, parentless and seemingly helpless children. FTC’s success depends on such emotion-provoking imagery, which serves to lead the more fortunate to want to help to restore dignity to the afflicted.

FTC carefully crafts a specific representation of the recipients of its aid efforts. Consistent with its aforementioned ‘feel-good’ approach to helping, the organization almost exclusively depicts images of happy Southern children. Evidently, FTC explicitly rejects an approach often referred to as ‘disaster porn’, which relies on negative imagery of poverty, starvation and dying children as a means of engaging the sympathies of potential donor-participants. Although such an approach may be effective with some audiences, it is clearly inconsistent with the positive image that FTC strives to project.

Investigating the meanings underlying FTC's positive images and hopeful message uncovers some imperialist and paternalistic thinking. FTC's actions contribute to the construction of the recipients of international fundraising efforts as incapable of taking care of themselves and lacking the skills and knowledge to even develop strategies to address issues, such as poverty. It is important to acknowledge that FTC is not solely or even primarily responsible for the perpetuation of such imperialist thinking. Instead, these systems of belief are historically and politically entrenched. In other words, the discourses used by FTC are not new but rather are updated versions of historic tropes related to the superiority of the global North over the South. In the contemporary context, the Northern media tends to "construct non-Western people and cultures as Other to the Western Self. Such constructions tend to recycle classic colonialist tropes that depict the [o]ther as mysterious, backward, sensual, deviant, and peripheral" (Canton & Santos, 2009, p. 192). These discourses position those in the South as less capable and in need of intervention. Further, these groups are generally contrasted with the normative depiction of the Canadian donor, who is in a position to help improve their lives. In this way people from the global South are portrayed as deviant from the Northern standard, thereby serving to reinforce Northern superiority (Mills, 2004; Said, 2007).

"We [recently] got a hand pump in our school and this saves me and my mother lots of time [for collecting water]. I also participated in a water and education project and have seen many changes. We are getting more aware about health and hygiene and are leaving behind old mentalities for a good future."

- Pawam, India

Figure 5.5 Testimonials. From the Free The Children website, February, 2013.
<http://www.freethechildren.com/international-programming/our-impacts/>

The quote by Pawam above (Figure 5.5), for instance, seems rather innocuous, describing how beneficial it is to have a clean water source closer to the community. However, interpreted differently it demonstrates that the community and its dwellers lacked such amenities, amenities that are taken for granted in the developed North. Further, Pawam is quoted as stating that through education the community is learning the proper hygiene techniques and is "leaving behind old mentalities for a good future". Although this may seem like a positive step towards her community's future health and sustainability, this statement may be understood as a one dimensional image of a community as needy and ignorant, and the NGO itself as the solution to the need. Pawam's quote omits information about local knowledge of health and hygiene, as well as the underlying causes and politics of the water scarcity in her community. Hence, while seemingly well intentioned, the overall message creates a space for the justification of paternalistic and civilizing actions.

Such constructions of the 'other' reinforce the disconnection between the giver and the recipient. The image of the needy 'other' within international aid discourses has perpetuated geopolitical divides, creating binary terms such as First and Third Worlds, global North and global South, Us and Them, developed and non-

developed and Western and non-Western. Development discourses further buttress such understandings by relying heavily on negative situations such as over-population, starvation, drought, famine, poverty, illiteracy, lack of freedom, violence, and corruption (Jefferess, 2002). These constructs are common in NGO promotional materials when addressing issues of 'non-developed' countries, regions, communities and individuals.

This reduction of North-South relations to a binary is evident in FTC's choice to profile Sierra Leone, a war torn country, whose schools need rehabilitation in order for young people to excel in their pursuit of primary education. Sierra Leone stands out as a unique example for which FTC has chosen to highlight the political landscape of a country. Generally when discussing development projects FTC does not refer to the political context of the country.

Much has been written about the need to acknowledge how NGOs' promotional strategies can obscure the relationship between the giver and the recipient (Batty, 1999; Jefferess, 2002; Manzo, 2006; Wirgau et al., 2010). Wirgau et al. (2010) describe involvement in international humanitarian causes as "a phenomenon that needs to be closely examined to understand its potential effects particularly as they relate to the relationship - or lack of relationship - constructed between the giver and the recipient" (p. 622). This is important in relation to youth involvement in international development/aid organizations, as young people need to gain an understanding of a group of people that goes beyond particular colonial representations.

It is common for the group or individual receiving development aid to be constructed as the 'other'. The portrayal of the needy 'other' in FTC's communications material is fundamental to eliciting emotions that encourage monetary contributions and capture and maintain public interest. Some have questioned whether depicting women and children in the African context as passive represents an extension of 19th century colonialism, portraying individuals as inferior, feminized, infantilized and the object of charity (Dodd cited in Manzo, 2006). Individuals are also characterized as innocent as a way of garnering public support (Mutua, 2002) and providing fulfillment and satisfaction to the Northern donor. Both Said (2007) and Mills (2004) discuss how positioning Southern peoples as 'others' constructs them as deviant and inferior to the Northern standard, reinforcing a skewed power relation between the North and the South, while masking the inequalities that perpetuate poverty, marginalization and oppression.

The rhetoric and actions promoted by FTC are incommensurate with the scale of the issues underlying the injustice that they purport to be working against. Although claiming to address global social justice issues, its organizational efforts do not focus on educating young people on the underlying causes or fostering critical awareness of the issues. Hence, an inconsistency between its rhetoric and actions becomes glaringly obvious.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The previous chapters have considered the extent to which FTC presents opportunities for developing a critical understanding of global inequities in relation to its rhetoric of working to realize substantive social change while guiding participation in some ways and not others. FTC seeks to motivate youth to engage in altruistic actions or activism. However, FTC's web site reveals a culturally dominant perspective on what captures and retains youths' attention. What is the dominant cultural formula for engaging and retaining young people? According to Chana (2007) the most effective rhetoric is a youth-centered framework that is fun, technologically relevant to young people's experiences, interesting and participatory in nature. Flanagan et al. (2007) identify several themes that resonate with youth involved in social justice organizations, including legitimizing marginalized identities, addressing socioeconomic inequalities, acting on feelings of social responsibility and becoming global citizens.

A factor in FTC's success in appealing to young people is that it is a culturally-sanctioned place for youth to explore their identities and gain a sense of belonging, realizing that they matter to a larger community of like-minded peers. This view is supported by Kennelly (2011) who notes (citing Martin, 2004), that activist youth "to a certain extent seek each other out in order to experience a 'sense of inclusion' and a 'corresponding sense of identity'" (p. 13).

My analysis in this thesis has shown that FTC harnesses young people's interests and passions in working with social justice issues but does not make

substantive efforts to provide youth with opportunities to learn about the reasons for existing social inequalities. As a result, FTC does not make the most of young people's potential for learning and for activism. This analysis raises issues relevant to the conceptualization of public pedagogy as introduced in Chapter 1. Critical public pedagogy has the possibility of interrupting the processes of injustice by educating in ways that support a culture of questioning and social change.

This chapter will consider some possible alternative approaches that FTC could undertake in order to create opportunities for young people to conceptualize their role in the global context. In contrast to its current neoliberal approach, adding a more critical perspective to the organization's online materials would enable FTC to foster a critical understanding of global inequities among young participants. Creating an awareness of how Northern individuals are implicated in the unequal distribution of power between the global North and South would be paramount.

FTC's rhetoric is significant as the organization influences many young peoples' understandings of issues of poverty and global injustice. While FTC has brought the issues of global poverty and inequality into mainstream consciousness, particularly among young people, the rhetoric of empowerment, global citizenship and help contributes to the illusion that global inequities and poverty are issues that can be addressed through simplistic methods, such as fundraising. As has been mentioned throughout the previous chapters, although these methods may alleviate specific hardships, they fail to advocate for systemic change.

As Charania (2011) suggests, few opportunities exist that allow youth to develop the necessary analytical skills that would help them to unpack the causes of oppression and poverty. She suggests the following questions related to global justice, Northern privilege, and silencing of the Southern voice as a good starting point:

How for example, might we engage a whole body of critical scholarship by Southern activists and scholars to help reformulate or at the very least challenge our notions of global intervention and assistance?...How does an understanding of colonialism help us to better understand current trade practices, regulations, and the production of poverty? Why are so many Northerners and Northern institutions in a position to 'help'? How might we get skeptical about our own desires to feel good and innocent? (p. 23)

Given that FTC's primary fundraising focus is working with Canadian youth at the elementary and secondary school levels, it is imperative that these questions should be engaged by the organization to encourage participants to critically interrogate the colonial past of the global North. The phenomenon of FTC and the altruistic feelings associated with doing 'good works' must not be taken at face value. Instead, the rhetoric being offered to youth must be explored to determine what opportunities could be presented to participants in order to interrupt the cycle of oppression and inequality.

Cook (2008) similarly challenges those involved in development work to be more involved in understanding how the historical processes of colonialism are repeated through similar ideologies, practices and organization of current international development agencies. Like Charania, Cook (2008) poses several questions regarding the ways in which colonial practices are delivered through development work.

How do Others lead their daily lives and under what circumstances?
What do they need? What do Western volunteers have to offer? How do
relations of power organize current ideas and practices of development?
How can those ideas and practices be changed to realize less oppressive
development agendas and a more just social reality? (pp. 24-25)

While these questions are intended for adults currently working in the international development field, they are extremely relevant to Canadian youth participating in FTC.

With FTC members numbering in the thousands, the organization is uniquely positioned to implement an alternate approach to social change, one that is less oppressive and marginalizing to those it is intended to help. Raising young people's awareness about the ways in which imperialist structures are implicated in global inequities would be foundational to such an approach. This seemingly small shift in FTC's rhetoric would create enormous change in conceptualizing help and also act as a first step towards challenging traditional imperial practices of social change. This would provide young people with an alternative lens through which to consider a critical approach to social justice.

The challenge for organizations, according to Cameron and Haanstra (2008), is finding "ways of making development issues interesting and engaging for Northern publics without distorting and misrepresenting them" (p. 1486). NGOs rely on creative fundraising strategies designed to hold the public's interest. Further, Cameron and Haanstra (2008) note that fundraising campaigns are integral to the development of an NGO's public identity. For example, the website of Oxfam Canada demonstrates how development issues can be made interesting and relevant while still utilizing a fundraising framework that works towards eliminating global poverty.

Oxfam presents its online promotional materials in a way that is similar to FTC. The website is interactive with multiple links that can be followed to gain more information about a particular topic. The opportunity to donate to support various campaigns is prominently displayed on each link. Like FTC, Oxfam provides a variety of opportunities to get involved with the organization, including links to its Twitter and YouTube accounts. Where Oxfam differs is how it chooses to highlight contemporary global issues that can be directly linked to poverty, inadequate access to health care and education and further marginalization of the globe's most vulnerable populations. For instance, on the home page of its website, Oxfam focuses on the 'Behind The Brands' campaign, noting:

Over the past century, powerful food and beverage companies have enjoyed unprecedented commercial success. But these companies have grown prosperous while the millions who supply the land, labor and water needed for their products face increased hardship. Now, a rapidly changing environment, affected communities and an increasingly savvy consumer base are pushing the industry to rethink 'business as usual'. Oxfam has examined the social and environmental impacts of the world's ten largest food and beverage companies and calls on them to take the critical next steps to create a just food system.

Oxfam/Grow/Act/Behind The Brands

This educative approach moves beyond reliance on consumption of fundraising products as a means of providing support to the global South. Rather, it places the power and responsibility of choice on those in the North, encouraging them to make conscious decisions about their patterns of consumption. Through the 'Behind the Brands' campaign, Oxfam has developed a 'scorecard' that lets the viewer know how the largest ten food and beverage companies rate with regard to their social and

environmental impact. In addition, consumers have the opportunity to determine which of the ten largest corporations manufacture some of their favorite products.

Oxfam's approach is designed to develop awareness among those who may not otherwise consider the impact of their consumer choices. Although Oxfam's approach embodies neoliberal strategies, as it engages individuals as consumers, it can be considered more political than that of FTC. Raising awareness of the ways Northerners are complicit in the oppression of the South through actions such as purchasing their favorite soft drink or chocolate bar creates an opportunity to engage with complex issues of power. This message challenges dominant rhetorical strategies in which "Northern 'selves' are portrayed as beneficent and as possessing the wisdom and agency needed to help Southern 'others', while the structural issues that sustain global poverty remain in the shadows" (Cameron and Haanstra, 2008, p. 1486). This type of campaign results in a much more critical approach to development work than used by FTC.

A second example of a youth-led, youth-focused organization is TakingITGlobal (TIG). Like FTC, TIG's target audience is young people and engages participants with an interactive online promotional website. The organization, founded in 1999, considers itself as one of the world's leading networks of young people. TIG's mission is to empower youth to 'understand' and 'act' on the world's greatest challenges (TakingITGlobal/About). Similar to FTC, TIG uses rhetoric such as global citizenship, youth participation, and young people as the change needed for a better future.

Where the organization differs from FTC is the opportunities TIG provides young people to engage with issues such as education, health, globalization, and human rights, and culture. Participants have the option to investigate a number of topics related to global inequities. For example, when the “Culture” link is selected three related issues are available for further exploration. These include, “Global Citizenship”, “Language”, and “Political Thought”. Each specific issue offers an overview, as well as a list of possible resources such as organizations, publications, blogs, policies and videos. All of these resources allow the viewer to gain a deeper understanding of a particular issue.

TIG does not support specific international development issues. Instead, the organization works to create awareness and provide background information on important global issues. For instance, the “Global Citizenship” link provides an overview of the tensions surrounding the meaning of global citizenship and the identity of global citizen. Here, a basic definition of global citizenship is provided, as well as a number of live links to publications that go into greater detail about global citizenship.

In addition, the organization encourages young people to get involved in issues that are important to them and helps to facilitate their actions through its Youth Movement program. This program connects participants with global youth-led and focused projects that are aligned with social issues that interest them.

An emphasis on structures of global inequalities and how young people may be complicit in supporting them, allows participants to make informed decisions on how best to direct their actions. Jefferess (2012) notes that social action cannot

always be framed as enjoyable and fun. On the TIG website, for instance, participants are encouraged to explore various sources to further their understanding of issues of global injustice. The website is designed to provide multiple perspectives, acknowledging the issues are multi-faceted. TIG's website conveys the importance of understanding how we are implicated in various forms of power in order to avoid inadvertently perpetuating oppression through our 'helping' actions. This organization's approach encourages viewers to engage with complex analyses and such learning can be expected to be challenging.

FTC's approach is markedly different. Rather than seeking to present viewers with complex analyses of global inequities its website serves to highlight the ways in which helping can be fun and enjoyable. Although purporting to be an organization committed to advancing global social justice, FTC's rhetoric related to helping is clearly limited. Instead of engaging with the complexity of forces that contribute to the creation and perpetuation of poverty and global inequities, the organization's website focuses on highlighting the development work it has already undertaken. Although celebratory rhetoric may be useful in captivating the attention of Northern young people, ultimately it does little to inform participants of overall structures which guarantee that inequity persists. Hence, the role accorded to young people in advancing so-called social justice is extremely constrained. Lack of attention to global inequities is puzzling, given the ubiquity of its rhetoric of activism. Whether intentional or not, FTC is largely encouraging youth to participate in ways that mirror dominant historical practices of development, which reinforce binaries and position them as superior. As a result, rather than

contributing to the further development of critical thinkers, FTC ends up reinforcing the status quo. Alternately, if FTC were to acknowledge the ability of youth to grasp some of the complexities surrounding global inequities, it could contribute to a movement that unsettles current approaches to the delivery of international aid, which could actually lead to more broad based and meaningful change.

The tensions associated with engaging with issues related to global inequities are not unique to FTC. All organizations undertaking charity or social justice work are faced with the challenges of presenting the harsh realities of inequity to its followers, while also trying to encourage their participation. FTC's reliance on presenting issues in a positive way may be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to foster good feelings among participants. This focus on 'feel-good' activities is likely to attract greater participation in the organization. Raising uncomfortable issues, such as privilege and the true complexity of social justice issues would be less palatable to participants. It is questionable whether the organization would have achieved the same level of prominence had it adopted a more critical perspective. Further, it is doubtful whether FTC would have been able to build such strong support among adults and teachers, thereby gaining such a broad based acceptance in the education system.

As Jefferess (2012) notes with respect to Me to We, the organization is missing pedagogical opportunities to truly teach about disempowerment, marginalization, and silencing of groups in the global South. FTC is similar in that rather than developing activities that lead young people to ask deeper questions, the focus remains on creating risk free activities that primarily serve to perpetuate

positive feelings on the part of its benevolent helpers. Jefferess (2008) proposes asking questions not only about the symptoms of inequities (poverty, lack of education, etc.) but also “why is it that certain people, or institutions, are in the position to help or ‘make a difference’ and how is that position related to the reasons why [the inequities exist]?” (p. 35). Despite the challenges inherent in such a strategy, FTC could introduce a critical approach without the need to abandon current practices. Raising critical questions about the broader context in which inequities arise is one way to accomplish this. The choice of whether to delve into the issues could be left to the discretion of the participants, much like TIG’s approach. Such an approach would be consistent with Giroux’s (2004) contention that we need to consider “what kind of educational work is necessary within what kind of public spaces to enable people to use their full intellectual resources...to make the operation of freedom and autonomy possible forces for as many people as possible in a variety of spheres” (pp. 75-76).

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